

VOLUME SEVEN

YOGA SADHANA PANORAMA



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

YOGA SADHANA
PANORAMA
VOLUME **S**EVEN

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

YOGA SADHANA PANORAMA

VOLUME SEVEN

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Satsangs and discourses given in cities of India
from 1993 to 1999*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Bihar School of Yoga 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission and should not in any way be taken as affecting the validity of the marks.

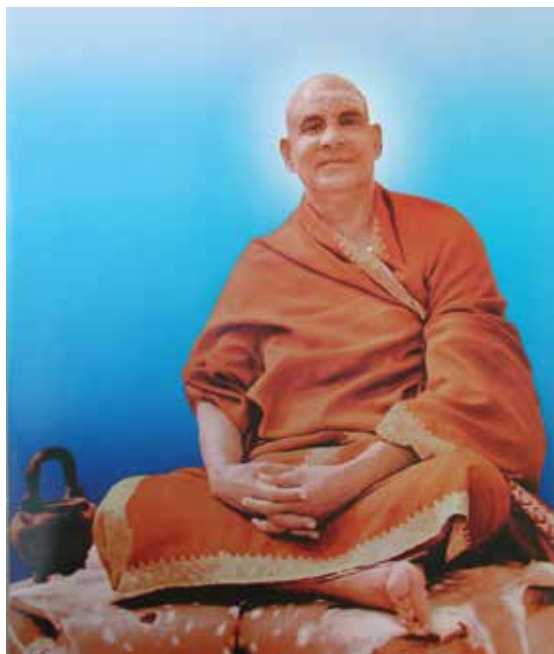
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2018

ISBN: 978-81-938420-0-3

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

Contents

1993

Mumbai

Stress, Yoga and You	3
----------------------	---

1994

Patna

Yoga and Human Potential	15
--------------------------	----

Mumbai

Basis of Yoga Philosophy	20
Opening Granthis	34
Nature of Human Consciousness	46
Yoga – A System for Development of Human Personality	57
Ladies Wing of Indian Merchants Chamber	62

1995

Delhi

Satsang on Spiritual Life	81
---------------------------	----

Kolkata

Satsang at the Rotary Club	92
Kothari Medical Conference	102
Ladies Study Group	110

Mumbai	
Yoga for the Mind	122
Delhi	
Yoga – A True Friend	133
Yoga and Mental Health	146
Spirituality and Health	156
Bengalaru	
Stress Management Through Yoga	169
Interview with Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati	180
Yogic Revolution	186
	1996
Delhi	
The Science of Yoga	197
Satsang	210
	1998
Mumbai	
Yoga and Health	223
Nitya Sannyasa	236
Bhagavad Gita	244
Satsang on Karma	282
	1999
Lucknow	
Three Dimensions of Yoga	293
Chennai	
Inauguration of Siva Darshan Yogashram	310
Yoga Research	315
Sankalpa for the New Millenium	332
Glossary	345
Index	362

1993

Mumbai



Stress, Yoga and You

25 May 1993, Mumbai

Yoga is a method through which we can integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands, or body, mind and spirit. We have to understand yoga today not as a spiritual science, but as a science of moulding an integrated personality which is very much needed in today's strife-torn and tension-ridden society. The tension which we experience in our day-to-day life in varying intensities manifests in the body, mind and spirit differently, and imbalances in our behaviour, thinking, physiological structure and emotions manifest.

The elimination of these imbalances is the main thrust of yoga and in the course of the growth of yoga, there have been many experiments carried out to try to improve the functioning of body and mind. In order to improve behaviour and mental faculties, yoga has become an integral part of the educational system in many countries.

Initially, we believed in the two extremes of yoga: for the spirit and yoga for physical health. Our identification with the physical body is known as *dehadhyasa*, and is related to the sensory and sensual experiences and the craving for happiness and fulfilment. We all desire happiness and fulfilment in life, and in order to attain these states we perform actions which are physical, emotional and spiritual. Our actions are influenced by the inherent weaknesses of our personality, the ambitions which we take as the goals of life, the needs which we try to fulfil, and the strengths or abilities which we express through action in order to attain fulfilment.

When the aspect of strength is predominant, there is an increase of ego, and when the weakness in our personality is predominant, there is dissatisfaction and loss of self-confidence. When our ambitions become high, we lose mental clarity. When the needs of our life become important, we tend to shut ourselves off from the other realities of life. Our total life experience revolves around these four factors which are inhibiting our creative nature. This is the meaning of *deha dhyasa*, deep identification with the world of sense objects, which leads to attachment.

The Hindi word ‘*asakti*’ is generally translated as attachment. There is both attraction and repulsion in our life. At the time of pleasure, happiness, contentment, or fulfilment there is attraction to that experience. At the time of dissatisfaction and unhappiness there is repulsion to that experience. The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali state (2:7): *Sukkaanushayi raagah*, meaning that in pleasure and happiness there is attachment.

The *Yoga Sutras* further state (2:8): *Duhkkaanushayi dweshah*, meaning that in pain, in suffering, in dissatisfaction there is repulsion. There is a turning from the experiences of life, so we constantly swing from *raga* to *dwesha*, from *dwesha* to *raga*, from attraction to repulsion and vice versa. These are the two poles of life.

As long as we swing between these two poles there is bound to be craving, conflict, unhappiness and suffering. According to yoga, *raga* and *dwesha* are the main causes of stress and tension in life, which manifest as physical disease, mental imbalance and spiritual dissatisfaction. The yogic theory of stress goes one step further and says that the nature of the human personality is to experience life in its totality. That is the aim of life, and if we are to experience life in its totality there has to be an awareness of *raga* and *dwesha*. Along with this awareness we have to gradually find a point of balance where we are not buffeted and thrown around by every wind that blows in the garden of our life.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna has given a simple formula for attaining this balance in life. He says, you have to use an instrument which cuts the bondage of pain and

pleasure (15:3): *Asanga shastrena dridhena chhittva*. The *shastra*, the instrument, with which we sever the bondage of pain and pleasure, is the aspect of non-attachment, *anasakta bhavana*, which has been called asanga. *Sanga* means company, *asanga* means not in company. We are in the company of raga and dwesha every moment of our life, but when we are not in their company, there is attainment, peace and happiness.

The nature of an individual is always pure. This pure nature is clouded by the vrittis. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Sri Krishna states (15:7):

*Mamaivaamsho jeevaloke jeevabhootah sanaathana;
Manahshashthaa neendriyaani prakritistaanhi karshati.*

This means, my aspect, which is known as jiva, is attracted to the world of the senses, to the dimension of prakriti, and when it comes within the confines of prakriti, this jiva is accompanied by the five senses and mind. The five senses, including the mind, accompany the jiva. The jiva has to be viewed, not in terms of an individual soul, but in terms of a reality of life which is giving us the experience of 'being here now'.

When we are 'here now' we have the senses and mind with us. We are trying to view the beautiful and vast horizon of life through a pipe. We simply see what is in front of us and block out the peripheral vision. Thus the senses, mind and desires are limited in their expression. This confined experience of the senses clouds the clarity of our consciousness.

There has to be a process through which we can remove the confines of the mind and senses and develop a broad vision of the self as an active participant in relation to the universe. This view has been presented in a beautiful sentence of the sages. *Vasudevah kutumbakam*, the entire universe has to be viewed as a part of yourself, as part of your family, not just the confines of your home and society.

The senses and mind create a problem here. In their limited nature they do not express their full potential. So how do we deal with the senses and mind? For the moment we are able to deal with the senses in a positive way so that we can eliminate stress and fine-tune our personality. The fine-

tuning of the personality is an integration of the faculties of head, heart and hands. The head represents rational power, the heart represents feeling and the hands represent action and behaviour.

Another point is that we tend to become insecure if we come to realize that in order to attain harmony, we have to create certain changes in our lifestyle. We have become so used to it, so conditioned to a pattern in life that it becomes difficult to alter it. But *purushartha*, effort, has to be made in order to reach the state where we are able to make these changes. *Purushartha* is yoga. When we are told to make changes in our lifestyle, immediately the fear arises that we will have to leave certain things behind. This concept of leaving behind or renouncing is actually a fear psychosis manifesting.

Frankly speaking, if you seriously and sincerely study the yogic tradition, you will not find a single statement that you have to leave this and that. The yogic tradition always speaks of attainment, which can be described in a simple way. You have to go from ground floor to first floor by climbing a series of steps. Before you place your foot on the step which is in front of you, you do not leave the ground. First you have to put the foot on the first step. Once the first step is achieved, the second foot automatically leaves the ground and goes to the second step. When the second step is achieved, the first foot automatically leaves the second step and goes to the third step. This is the experience of yoga, that attainment always comes before renunciation or leaving behind. You cannot renounce anything. You can only attain something and in the process of attainment the limiting and negative tendencies, the dross of life automatically falls away.

Three ideas have been presented in relation to yoga. Yoga believes that stress is caused by the fear of leaving something behind – point number one. Stress is caused by not having a clear perception – point number two. Stress is caused by identification with the world of senses and objects – point number three. In the yogic tradition different systems and practices have been devised to enable us to overcome these various limitations.

Let us take, first of all, stress and tension caused by intense identification or attraction and repulsion in the world of senses and objects. This stress is experienced in the form of muscular, cerebral, emotional and rational tension. Excess of any of these is the cause of illness.

Something which we do every day is sit. In this sitting posture we are accumulating stress and tension which is experienced in the form of lower back pain, lack of circulation in the legs and stiffening of the nerves and muscles. It can also be experienced in the form of congestion of the digestive system. If these conditions continue to affect our body, there is going to be a serious problem – possibly lumbago, spondylitis, migraine, digestive problems, hernia, ulcers, constipation, and even malfunctioning of an internal organ.

What is diabetes? Insulin is not being produced in the body and the level of glucose increases. It filters out into the blood. Glucose is monitored in the blood and comes out through the urine, and this is due to stress in the abdominal region, in the digestive system.

In order to deal with physical stress, yoga has prescribed the techniques of asana. Asanas are not physical exercises, but postures which eliminate tensions from the muscles, joints and organs. If you practise an asana properly when you are suffering from some problem, that imbalance will be removed and you will experience health. Yoga is not a therapy, it is not for the treatment of physiological conditions, but diseases go away after the body attains harmony within itself. To have a disease-free body is not the aim of yoga, but it is a symptom of the yogic practices through which you experience equilibrium, harmony and balance. In order to relieve cerebral tension, yoga prescribes the techniques of pranayama or breathing techniques. In this way, we are gradually able to harmonize the entire structure of the personality. This harmony is the aim of yoga. This is how we deal with physical stress.

How do we deal with mental stress? Through concentration and relaxation techniques. We never relax properly in our life. In sleep we do not attain relaxation. We can never provide relaxation to the mind, through the bottle, by creating

pleasant experiences, for it is the nature of the mind to be always dissipated and distracted, running in one hundred directions without our conscious knowledge. You may think that you are concentrating on my talk, but I can assure you that you are not. There are subtle experiences which are constantly bombarding the mind on the subconscious and unconscious as well as conscious levels, about which you have no understanding and of which you are not aware. Only your ears are attentive, the other senses are doing their job. The inputs of the other senses are being received, processed and filtered by the brain even now. Many things are happening simultaneously within our personality. How can there be concentration in that state? Yoga has devised a way to provide mental, rational and emotional relaxation through a process of mental discipline.

In the *Yoga Sutras*, Sage Patanjali describes yoga as (1:1): *Athah yoga anushasanam*. It means that, yoga is nothing but a form of control over the subtle faculties, experiences and expressions of the mind. *Anu* means the subtle aspect of personality, *shasan* means to have control over. This beautiful sutra defines the total yogic process. The subtle experiences are beyond the range of your awareness. You are thinking right now, but you are not aware of the thoughts. Right now in the deeper mind many emotions are coming up, but you are not aware of them. In the deeper mind, many desires are manifesting, but you are not aware of them. How do you relax this state of mind? The formula is simple. Focus your mind on one point. There has to be intensity of concentration. There has to be a merger of your awareness with the object of contemplation. When you do that, the majority of the faculties of mind and consciousness are pin-pointed at one centre. Then there is greater relaxation, as all the faculties are drawn towards one direction.

Consciously, subconsciously and unconsciously we are doing a thousand things at any given moment. The sensory faculty which is active in one situation is the sensory faculty which is making us aware of the present experience. If the air-conditioner in this room fails and you all begin to sweat

heavily, your total attention will go to the feeling of heat. Despite your best efforts to listen to what I am saying, there will not be much awareness or attention.

Here is another example. You suddenly remember that you forgot to lock your house. Despite your best efforts to be attentive, eighty percent of your awareness will be at the door of your house, not here. A faculty that becomes predominant at any given time is the state which we become aware of. This way the mind blocks off many of the areas where we can extend our awareness. In yoga, by focusing all the faculties together, we provide concentration and relaxation to the mind. Instead of one hundred things happening simultaneously, maybe ten things will happen simultaneously and ninety percent of the faculties will be at one point. This is the concept of pratyahara and dharana, the aspect of mental training in yoga.

Pratyahara and dharana are the concepts of bringing the attention and awareness to a state where most of the faculties of body and mind are together. In pratyahara and dharana there is greater relaxation and greater concentration. This way we are able to train our mind, and with this mental training we become objectively aware of our surroundings and interactions. With greater awareness we are able to control the distressing traits of our personality, the negative traits and thoughts, feelings and emotions, the feeling of anger, anxiety, frustration, depression, and so forth, for essentially we have the potential to fully express all the faculties at our command.

Yoga says that these faculties of body and mind are subject to the influences of prana and chitta. *Prana shakti* is the vital energy controlling the physical sensory body. *Chitta shakti* is the vital energy controlling the performance and activity of the mind. In order to understand prana and chitta and further clarify our concept of life and interaction with life, we have to understand one more thing. Pure or transcendental awareness, or divine consciousness, resides at a level beyond elemental consciousness. Elemental consciousness means awareness of earth, water, fire, air, ether and mind. Those who are aware of the theories and principles of kundalini yoga

will understand this. Pure consciousness is represented in our personality as the experience of sahasrara chakra where there is no distinction, no duality. When this pure energy decides to manifest in the world of sense objects, it has to go through a process of transformation. It is like raw electrical energy, which cannot be used in wires which simply conduct 220 volts. It has to go through different step-down transformers.

These step-down transformers are the six chakras. When we begin to manifest consciousness and energy in the material plane, the process of transformation first takes us to the level of the mind, (the mental force which is *ajna chakra*) and one *indriya*, one sense organ through which we can perceive the world in any colour that we wish. The second stage is *akasha tattwa*, the ether element, which is slightly denser than the mind. Then comes *vayu tattwa*, the air element, an element denser than *akasha*. Next comes *agni tattwa*, the fire element, an element denser than *vayu*. After this is *jala tattwa*, the water element, denser than *agni*, and the final dimension is *prithvi tattwa*, the earth element, denser than water. This is the growth or the evolution of pure transcendental consciousness and I generally use the phrase, 'Evolution from the sublime to the ridiculous'. Matter is transcendental awareness.

We are at the level of matter and function at this level. The senses express their faculties at this level. Even the mind, which is next to transcendental consciousness, expresses itself at the level of matter. Therefore, the problem arises of stagnation of the faculties. We are living examples of this stagnation of energy and consciousness. We cannot see beyond our blinkered vision. In order to evolve our vision from matter into higher realms of perception, we have to go through the process of meditation.

Meditation is a beautiful science which transcends the totality of human experience. The ultimate aim of meditation is to take one to *samadhi*. The aim of meditation is to raise the awareness to the dimension where one does not experience the motion of consciousness and energy. It has been described as a state of consciousness in the *Bhagavad Gita* (15:6):

*Na tadbhasayate suryo na shashanko na paavak;
Yadgatvaa na nivartante taddhaama paramam mama.*

Where the sun does not shine, where the moon does not give light and where the fire does not burn. Once a person attains that state he does not come back again to the lower planes of consciousness.

Chandra or the moon represents chitta shakti. *Surya* or the sun represents the energy that governs the world of matter. The moon represents the energy which governs the subtle dimension of thought and mind. *Agni* or fire represents the vitality of prana shakti and chitta shakti in this gross and subtle world. Through the meditative process we reach a point where there is total cessation of movement, where everything just stops and there is no activity. In this state of inactivity experiences happen very fast.

When we sit in a moving train and look out of the window, what do we see? Scenery flashes by, mountains, trees, rivers, cities pass at great speed. When the train becomes static, and we look out of the window, there is better vision. This clearer vision of life is what we aspire for in yoga. At ground level our vision is limited. When we go to the first floor, we have a wider view, and if we go to the third floor the view is wider still. The higher we go the broader our vision becomes. If we go to the topmost floor of our building, which in our bodies is supposed to have only seven floors, we have a broad vision of the world and ourselves. When we have this vision of life, we attain *satya*, we become one with reality.

Generally, there are two experiences of life, one is appearance and the other is reality. We are more aware of appearance than reality. Our vision has to change, we have to become more aware of reality and less aware of appearance. That is the direction that the practices of yoga take through the vast systems of asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana techniques. At the same time, there is purification, non-attachment and attainment.

We cannot be fully detached. Detached means to cut oneself off completely. Attached means to link oneself

completely. Non-attachment is the attitude which we adopt to either attachment or detachment. If we are non-attached then whether we are attached or detached does not matter, there is balance. We have to find this balance in our life.

Therefore, it is my humble suggestion that all of us make an effort to incorporate the principles of yoga into our lifestyle. No matter where we may be – we may be suffering physically, we may be in a state of stress or psychological tension – at whatever stage we may be in life, we have to make an effort to incorporate the yogic principles: awareness, relaxation and concentration. They are attained by the different techniques, whether of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, hatha yoga, jnana yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga or any other yoga. Once we are able to incorporate these yogic principles into our life, we will realize that our life is a flower on the tree of creation and every unfoldment is beautiful.

1993

Patna

Mumbai



Yoga and Human Potential

12 April 1994, Notre Dame School, Patna

Yoga is a system and a tradition with which we have been involved for a long time. Although you see us dressed in the guru robes of a sannyasin, we are yoga teachers, and we teach yoga for the development of the body, mind, intellect and emotions. Yoga has only one aim: to awaken, enhance and increase the potential of human personality, so that we can become better in whatever field we choose in the course of our life. It is this training that we give through the practices of yoga.

Once upon a time, the king of the jungle was in a happy and joyous mood. He was walking around the jungle roaring at the other animals and asking them why they were not as big, as strong and as powerful as he. The lion came across a deer, gave a big roar and said, "You little creature. Why aren't you as big, as strong and as powerful as me?" The deer did not answer; it simply ran away.

The lion came across a bear and again gave a big roar and said, "Why aren't you as big, as strong and as powerful as me?" The bear also gave the lion one look and ran away. In this way, every animal in the forest ran away from the lion. Ultimately, the lion came across a tiny mouse which had just come out of its hole in the ground, and asked it the same question. The mouse looked up and replied, "I'm not as big or strong or powerful as you because I've been sick."

Many times God also asks us this simple question and we are unable to give him a proper reply. Our reply is much

like that of the mouse. We tell God that we have been sick, physically, mentally, externally and internally. So, how can anyone expect us to be in command of ourselves? In the course of our life, we will come across many different situations and circumstances which will create tension in our mind and different illnesses and diseases in our body. When we have to face these tensions, illnesses and diseases, we will notice that the qualities, the strengths that are inherent within us do not grow and do not manifest. It is here that yoga comes to our aid.

You might have seen yoga demonstrated on television or read about yoga in the newspapers, but ultimately, you will begin to wonder, 'What is it?' I will tell you in simple language. First, yoga is a system of therapy which helps to release different illnesses, diseases, mental problems, frustrations, anxieties and tensions from the body. A lot of work has been done in this field by the medical profession and by scientists who have come to the conclusion that the practices of yoga can cure different illnesses like breathing problems, digestive problems, heart problems, and even the so-called incurable diseases such as cancer and AIDS. If you look at yoga from this angle, it is a comprehensive form of therapy which helps to eliminate the blockages and diseases from the body and from the mind.

The second aspect of yoga is in psychology or psychotherapy. This is an important aspect for we all have some kind of mental or psychological deficiency. As students we want to have clear minds, sharp memories, good receptivity and a high level of concentration. As adults we want to have the ability to manage our mental difficulties, our stress and our emotional problems. It is here that yoga can help to awaken the faculties of mind and give us the ability to correct such states within the mind.

I have never been to school. I do not know what it feels like to go to school. However, through the practices of yoga, I have been able to pick up many things which have helped me to grow in life, which have helped me to have a clear mind and intense concentration. In the 1970s we were contacted

by the administrators of a college in France where it was a record if four students passed per year. The administrators said, "You make many claims about yoga being able to improve the personality and mind. We want you to teach yoga in our college to see if you can make the fifth student pass and set a new record."

We accepted the challenge and for six months we taught the students simple yoga practices of asana and pranayama. In one year the improvement was so great that the students who were drug addicts, the first to commit crimes, and the students who would not study, changed completely. Now it is a record if four students fail their year in that college.

As a result, in France, Germany, England, Ireland and Canada, yoga has become a compulsory subject in secondary schools, in higher secondary schools, at college level and in universities. Our job today is not to teach yoga practices to the students, but to teach the teachers who teach their students in a classroom environment. The education departments in Europe have accepted that the practice of asana and pranayama can help to increase memory retention power and the capacity to learn. There have been many students who have completed their high school years in less than one year. In the European education system, the students are tested every month to see if they are ready to move up to the next class. In this way students can complete their entire high school education in less than one year with the help of the concentration techniques of yoga.

In this respect, yoga is mind management. Mind management helps to provide a sense of discipline, a degree of concentration and awakens the brain and the mind which becomes like a powerful receptor, like a microphone. You have been attending this school for some years and have been in this hall many times. Without looking around tell me how many fans are in this hall? Thirty-two? Fifteen? You have been in this hall many more times than me. It is my first time here. In fifteen minutes you have looked around many times. You have looked up, down and sideways. You might be alert in your studies, but your mind is not alert when it comes to

being aware of the environment. This is one shortcoming of the mind.

The mind has to become so receptive and powerful that you should know how many fans, lights, doors and windows there are in the room without looking around. It is not necessary to count; you just know it because the mind becomes like a receptor, like an antenna. This is the aim of yoga psychology: to increase the receptivity of the mind.

The third aspect of yoga is known as the science of life, *jivan vijñana*. It is known as the science of life because it deals with imbibing new *samskaras*, qualities which help us in life. There are many qualities which help us in our life, not just one or two. These qualities eventually guide our mentality, our performance and interactions in life.

In order to improve this lifestyle, yoga aims at providing certain qualities which can make you into a superhuman being, not like superman or supergirl, but a superhuman being. In all the comics that you see there are many different superbeings, but never a superhuman because not one has yet come forward. There might be a superman, a supergirl, a superwoman, but there is nobody who is a superhuman. It is the *samskaras* which ultimately make you into a different kind of human being with affection, compassion and love for the whole of humanity.

Superhuman beings are rare on this planet. There have been luminaries in the course of history who have shown a path to people, and if you follow this path you can ultimately become a superhuman being, and you can also realize God. Yoga makes the effort and an attempt to provide a person with qualities that can help one to grow in life. Therefore, the third aspect of yoga is known as *jivan vijñana*, the science of life. These are the three aspects of yoga.

How can we begin yoga? We are aware of our body. After the body we are aware of the brain, and after the brain we are aware of the mind, and after that we become aware of the spirit. Our awareness begins with something which is physical and material, and it evolves to a spiritual stage.

To begin with the material and physical, yoga teaches certain *asanas* which are physical postures and certain

pranayamas which are techniques to increase the capacity of the brain. First of all, let us begin with an asana, tadasana. In this practice you have to stand upright with your feet together, with the fingers interlocked, the palms facing up and the back of the hands on top of the head. Take a deep breath in and stretch the body up. Try to touch the ceiling. Then breathe out and again come down, feet flat on the floor. Practise the asana ten times in this way. Tadasana stretches the entire body which helps to release pain, tensions and stiffness from the joints and the body becomes charged with vitality again. Whenever you feel tired and have no energy or stamina, practise tadasana ten times and you will see the difference. You will feel dynamic afterwards, which is the effect of the asana.

To increase the power of the brain there is one simple practice called bhramari pranayama. Close the ears with the fingertips. Close the eyes and take a deep breath in. When you exhale make a humming sound – mmmm. If you do this five times every day before your studies, I can assure you that in the course of time whatever you study, whatever you read, you will remember and retain in your memory. You should do this particular practice every day if you want to become number one in your studies.

This is how the practices of yoga can help people of different types and ages to increase the strength and faculty of body and mind.

Basis of Yoga Philosophy

28 August 1994, Prem Puri Ashram, Mumbai

It has been a long time, in fact many moons have come and gone since I was last in Bombay. During this time a lot has happened in the field of yoga and in the field of our work.

In one way we can say that the movement of yoga has been given a new direction and we are all hopeful that in the coming years, we shall see a positive change in the lives of those people who adopt yoga.

We come to yoga because of certain ideas, needs, aspirations and we come because we are suffering physically. We come to yoga because we need mental health, mental balance, mental equilibrium and we come to yoga because we wish for some kind of spiritual attainment. Attainment of physical health, obtaining mental equilibrium, obtaining some kind of spiritual experience or even enlightenment are symptoms of yoga practice. If these are the symptoms, then what is the result of yoga?

The end result by which all the philosophies are guided is that the life of human beings, the life of a person, the life of an individual has another dimension which is unseen and unperceived. By certain efforts, by certain processes, when we attain that unknown dimension, then there is *nivritti*, liberation from the bondages of life. This particular concept, this particular philosophy created some kind of thought in me. What is the meaning of bondage? After a lot of thinking – because I did not find the solution in any of the literatures or scriptures – it came to me that there are two main bondages in

life. The first is bondage to pain in the form suffering and this suffering can be physical, it can be mental, it can be emotional. Suffering represents a state of imbalance, imperfection in the human personality. Suffering represents a drive, a motivation which is continuously seeking satisfaction and fulfilment. In the absence of that satisfaction and fulfilment, there is suffering.

This search for satisfaction and fulfilment is not only mental. It is not only a conscious process, it is not only a rational process, but the entire anatomical structure, the molecular structure of a being has that *samskara*. Even the molecules within the physical body, even the feelings, even the emotions, they all have this drive. They are moving towards something. They are moving towards a form of attainment, and that attainment is pleasure.

When there is imbalance, which is physical, then diseases are experienced in life. We may attribute the cause to some external factor, but that is according to the limitations of our intellect. Our intellect has certain limitations. The intellect has certain areas within which it functions, and it is the intellect which eventually decided that 'I am suffering because of this reason'. However, the totality of life is definitely not guided by our rational or intellectual process, and the intellect will only take us a certain distance in the discovery of the process of evolution within the human personality.

The human personality is like an iceberg. Ten percent of the iceberg is seen on the surface of the ocean and the remaining ninety percent, the major part, is submerged. What we see, what we perceive with our physical eyes, the senses – the tip of the iceberg – seems to be gigantic. It seems that only what can be seen exists, but it is not so.

Similar experiences happen in the realm of intellect, in the realm of *buddhi* too. We think anything that is perceivable and can be recognized by *buddhi* is final and that there is nothing more beyond it, so all our interpretations about our life, about our actions, about our personal philosophy and thoughts related to life, are confined to the areas of *buddhi*.

Yoga says no! As you are attached to your intellect, you are bound to define every form of experience whether it be

physical or psychological, you are bound to define every kind of state, whether it be external or internal, in black and white, right and wrong, pleasure and pain. This leads to inner mental conflict and indecision of mind. Indecision and suffering is the result of intellectual gymnastics which denote a state of imbalance and disharmony.

It therefore becomes necessary that an effort to transcend suffering has to be made in life. All the saints have said it. Buddha has said that the state of nirvana is the end of suffering. Mahavir has said that the end of suffering is the aim to which one must aspire. Yogis have said that in samadhi, one overcomes the duality of life. Vedantins have said that after attaining realization one overcomes, or goes beyond, the bondages of maya. In these words, people have defined their own understanding and experiences of suffering and transcendence of suffering.

Suffering is a very broad word. Physical suffering in form of disease, illness, arthritis, asthma, diabetes, cancer – whatever form it may take, there is physical suffering. The body suffers. In order to alleviate physical suffering, there are practices of asanas and pranayamas. Many people, scientists and intellectuals, have conducted experiments in a scientific way and the results are known to all of you. I don't have to mention again the physical aspects of yoga. I don't know if you are aware, but only last year during the World Yoga Convention held in Munger in November, it was announced by the swami who runs the Satyananda Yoga Centre in London that experiments have been conducted with the help of medical professionals in the treatment of AIDS at one medical hospital. Of course this research is in its very primary stages, but within the short span of one year, it was seen that some people were able to reverse the progression of AIDS. Some were able to stop it where it started and the disease did not progress. There was one patient who tested HIV negative from HIV positive.

Even in this field yoga can, and has contributed much, and I'm not talking only of AIDS of course. AIDS research is only in the primary stages and a lot has to be done before we

can say with firmness of mind and conviction that yoga can help. However, so far the results have been very encouraging.

There is no question that if we know the right combination of practices; if we are able to hit upon the right practices of yogasana, pranayama, concentration, and relaxation techniques, it is possible to bring about harmony and balance in the physiological structure, thus ending the suffering of the physical body. Of course, it takes some time even to hit the right combination necessary for an individual; it can take quite some time. There are physical limitations, limitations of energy, limitations of age, of environment, of body and of disease. One has to work hard at it, but once a proper combination is found, one can go a long way. There is no doubt about it.

You have to experiment with yourself. You cannot depend even on the swamis to provide you with the right combination. How can swamis provide you with the right combination? They don't even know you. How can I provide you with the right combination? I only see you for a few days every year. I can't. One has to experiment. It is a question of trial and error and of course, it is important that the tuning of frequencies takes place between the sufferer and the instructor for without that, it is not possible to 'listen to the music'.

Just as we are able to help the physiological conditions and alleviate suffering of the body by the practice of asana and pranayama, it also becomes possible using the same system of trial and error, to treat mental suffering. This takes a longer time. The body is something physical with which we can easily and normally identify. Mind is something which we know exists, but can never pinpoint just what it is. Some people say mind is a bundle of thoughts. Some say a bundle of samskaras, some say a bundle of karmas. Over the course of years, many different theories have come up, but we have not yet been able to define mind even though the major components are known and can be worked with.

According to the tradition of Samkhya, mind can be defined in four categories. It has been defined as having the areas of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. Within these

four areas are many sub-processes happening continuously: like rationality, like thought. They are attributes of buddhi. Your rationality, your analysis, your capacity to understand something, your thought processes, they are all different attributes of buddhi, and in the same way are uncontrolled emotions like fear, like depression, like anxiety, over which there is no rational control. In this way, Samkhya has definitely made an attempt, and I think so far, the most accurate attempt, to define mind. There is no clearer system than Samkhya.

Yoga follows the same pattern when it defines the chitta vrittis, when it says that the modifications of mind are five-fold: in the form of *pramana*, in the form of *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra* and *smriti*. *Pramana* means right knowledge, definite proof based on reality, knowledge which is based on the existence of something which is recognized by the senses and the mind to be true. *Viparyaya* means wrong knowledge, something which can be and which cannot be, but we don't know which it is.

I'll give you an example. Before coming here, I was in Satna conducting a yoga convention. It was a very hectic and massive convention. Though not an international one like the event held in Munger, there were about 3,000 people present. Every day there would be news reports of the convention in the newspapers but the photographs used were totally wrong. How and why? They used to reverse the negatives, so that a person who was actually sitting on my right, would be seen in the newspaper as sitting on my left. That is *viparyaya*, *bhranti*. You see the photograph and you think it is correct, accurate, true, but in reality it is not true because the person was actually on my other side. How are we to judge when 'proof' like this is given? Any photographer can do it. You have a nice photo in which everything is reversed. Are we to believe that photography or are we to believe what actually happened? It is a question which will remain a question. That is *bhranti*, that is *bhrama*, that is *viparyaya*.

Vikalpa is when mind is not fixed on one thing and jumps from one to the next without any base to it. Mental conflict and not knowing what is right and what is wrong, not being able

to decide, that is vikalpa. These three aspects of chitta vritti belong to the realm of buddhi. Vikalpa belongs to buddhi and also to manas. *Smriti*, memory in which everything is stored, something that happened to you in this life, something that happened to you in the past life also belongs to the realm of buddhi.

Nidra or sleep, which has been defined in yoga as nidra and in English as sleep, is not actually the normal sleep that we experience at night. It is absence of consciousness. When the consciousness isolates itself from the senses, from the mind, then that is known as nidra. It is not the snoring sleep of night-time which is known as nidra; that is a misnomer. Nidra belongs to the realm of ahamkara, so even in the yogic tradition these attributes, these major functions of mind, have been associated with the inner personality: manas, chitta, buddhi and ahamkara, and there are processes by which one can harmonize the inner activities and those processes are the practices of pratyahara and dharana.

The process of yoga

First of all, there is balance and harmonization of the mental structure and after that, there is transcendence of the mental suffering, and this includes emotions. Then comes psychic suffering and this comes in form of fear. Fear of what? *Vyadhi*, disease. Fear of what? *Jara*, old age. Fear of what? *Mrityu*, death. Spiritual traditions say that when a person is born, from the moment of birth, sorrow becomes the predominant factor to guide the destiny of life. From the time of birth, it is sorrow, the seed of sorrow, which becomes powerful and guides the actions and behaviour of every individual. We try to escape from sorrow.

It is this fear, which is known as the psychic fear, that has to be regulated and controlled. Psychic suffering manifests in the form of fear, and of course, people try to alleviate the suffering by certain practices of meditation. The meditation takes different forms also.

For a bhakti yogi, meditation takes one form in which we try to let ourselves go, we try to let ourselves experience the

process of surrender. It has been defined in the *Ramayana* in one form and in other traditions in other ways. The process of letting go, the process of surrendering, the process of developing some form of higher concept of God, is not an external process but an internal one. It is a part of the meditative process. Bhakti is a meditative process.

Whatever method you choose, in that method, there has to be fixation of mind upon the action taking place at that particular moment – whether it be mental, whether it be emotional, whether it be external. That fixation of mind is the meditative process and it applies to bhakti yoga, it applies to karma yoga, it applies to jnana yoga. If you apply this fixation of mind, the concentration of mind, in the daily activities which we call karma, then the intensity of mind changes the entire performance of the karma. How? There is no dissipation of energy. There is no distraction of energy, and when energies are not dissipated, when the energies are not distracted, when your mind remains tranquil in every form of activity, then that becomes a part of meditation and meditation takes place dynamically in the performance of an action.

When there is expectation in karma yoga, then there is distraction, there is restlessness. Along with the dissipation there is restlessness. The restlessness only happens when there is an expectation of a certain result. If there is no expectation and one is performing the karma yoga as a *kartavya*, as a duty, then that concentration of mind becomes a meditative process and that is dynamic meditation.

I don't know if I told you of this particular event which took place once in my life. I was travelling in America and came to a place where I lived with a disciple of Ramana Maharshi. This Bhagwan was a jnana yogi. All his literature and all his teachings simply state one idea, 'enquire'. This disciple, a very bright person, talked to me about his experiences in sadhana and he said to me, "Swamiji, I practise jnana yoga meditation." I said, "Oh yes, what is that?" He said, "Every morning when I am having breakfast, I ask myself 'Who am I?' and I wait for an answer." So, of course, in front of him I did not say anything but I thought to myself, 'If I also begin

to think over my breakfast, 'Who am I?', then what kind of answer will I get?' You see, jnana yoga is something very peculiar. If you ask yourself 'Who am I?', or 'Who are you?' then you won't get an answer. No, because at that moment it's not jnana yoga, but buddhi yoga, yoga of intellect. Buddhi yoga is not the yoga of knowing.

There is a difference between intellect and knowledge derived from intellect, and knowing and the intuitive conviction derived from the process of knowing. Of course, the basis of jnana yoga is sublimation of the intellect, it is not using the intellect. We use the intellect to come a certain distance, but after that there has to be sublimation and this sublimation in jnana yoga happens only in meditation, not by thinking 'Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?' and 'Who are you and what are you doing here?' What I am trying to tell you by these different examples is that there has to be an effort in life to obtain awareness and concentration, one-pointed fixation of mind without which one cannot fuse the energies of mind. This is the process of yoga.

Towards sattwa

What should one do in order to come to this state where we are able to eliminate the psychic suffering which we experience in the form of fear? Meditation, which leads to awareness, which leads to concentration. This meditation need not be done sitting on the floor with the spine straight and with the eyes closed. It is the process of dharana and dhyana in yoga and the techniques that are taught in the form of chidakash dharana, in the form of this dharana, in the form of that dharana, in the form of this practice, in the form of that practice. They are simply practices which help one understand one's inner nature. However, after you are able to understand your inner nature, a different approach has to be adopted and what is this different approach?

This is the theme of my lecture. I am coming to the theme now. The theme of my lecture is 'Become sattwic' and I can assure you that no one in the world is sattwic. We do not know what the sattwa nature is. We have never experienced it nor

will we ever experience it normally, until and unless we adopt a certain structured discipline in life.

Human beings are by nature tamasic predominantly, and rajasic. There is total absence of sattwa from our life. How can we call ourselves tamasic? Because generally, *tamasic* means one who is dull, one whose brain is an idiotic brain, one whose mind is totally dull, an unreceptive mind, and that is the normal concept of tamas, but it is not tamas.

The nature of tamas is to remain obsessed by one particular state of being, to remain obsessed in a particular state and not want to change: for fear of losing your sense of comfort and happiness, for fear of losing security, for fear of losing what you have attained. Even if you are suffering, you won't want to change your lifestyle because you don't know what will happen in the next lifestyle. That is tamas and most of us, 99.9% of humanity, is tamasic by nature. Not dull, not idiotic, not full of lethargy, not full of sleep, but fixed in a state of being and not wanting to see what is beyond our field of perception. Therefore, we can safely say that tamas is the predominant quality and nature of every human being.

The second quality of every human being is rajas. *Rajas* means the effort which we make to attain satisfaction. The superimposition of the nature of 'I', that is rajasic nature. Manipulation. We are all manipulative people. In fact, I am also trying to manipulate your thoughts in order to make you understand what I'm saying! Rajas is development of an idea which emphasizes the qualities of the individual being and not the qualities of the universal being. Rajas represents our strengths, our weaknesses, our ambitions, our needs, the physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual and so forth. The ambition, physical, social, emotional and spiritual strength which we use in life, abilities and qualities which we use in life to gain some form of *santosh* and *sukha*, contentment and pleasure, and the weaknesses which inhibit our personality from full expression of self – where is the aspect of sattwa in our life? It doesn't exist.

Sattwa will only come after you have somehow managed to quieten your mind from the thought-hopping that it does

all the time. Sattwa is a state which will come when you have stopped your mind from hopping from one desire to the next. It will come, because the nature of sattwa is of light, *prakasha*. The nature of sattwa is of effulgence. Only then can we overcome the limitations and the imbalances of the body and mind; only then can we awaken our creative potential. Even if you are keen on practising kundalini yoga for the reason of awakening your chakras and kundalini, you need to have a base of sattwa. One cannot awaken kundalini by having a tamasic nature; one cannot awaken kundalini by being rajasic. There has to be a base, a sattwic nature, and that is something that has to be understood in the context of yoga.

Yoga states clearly that after you have stopped, controlled and directed the vrittis of chitta, the modifications of mind, you develop an awareness which is known as the *sakshi bhava*, the witness awareness, the drashta awareness, and in that awareness, in that state of experience, *prajna*, the inner wisdom becomes effulgent.

Samadhi is the beginning of the sattwic nature in an individual, and within samadhi there is a long way to go. Therefore, for every practitioner of yoga, and more specifically for the Bombay group because it has been involved with the practices of yoga for a long time, I think it is time that we all make an effort to not only practise yoga and meditation, mantra, asana and pranayama and other techniques in order to walk on the clouds and feel good, healthy and happy. We want to have that kind of experience and it will definitely be there for it is part of our nature; however, it is about time that, as spiritual sadhakas and aspirants, we make an effort to awaken the sattwic nature in life.

Along with your meditation, develop some compassion; along with your meditation, develop some affection; along with your meditation, develop some love; along with your meditation, develop devotion too. Affection, love, compassion and devotion will become tools by which you can develop the sattwic nature. Please remember though, that there should not be attachment in love, nor in compassion nor in

devotion. There should be no attachment because you know what attachment is? It is known as *asakti*, two magnets coming together and sticking. Attachment means you can't let go. It is not something that requires a lot of mental gymnastics. Asakti is something which comes and which one cannot get rid of. Even love, if there is attachment, becomes a binding force and not a liberating force and likewise if there is attachment in devotion.

In meditation, we try to develop four things. One has to be careful to remain an *anasakta*, unattached, and notice I'm not using the word 'detachment'. It is wrong usage but I prefer this unattached rather than detached because attachment, detachment, and unattached, they mean three different things. I won't go into that now, but you should try to develop this non-attachment, being unattached. Don't try to develop detachment. Detachment is something very hard and harsh. Non-attachment is being there, but not being affected by it. This has to be the form of your sadhana now.

Up until now, we were creating a base in life, and now we have to go one step beyond. So much for the practice of yoga. This has been the change that has come about in the teaching of yoga, especially for those people who have been involved and who understand the yogic process. It is all right to practise it for your own wellbeing and health, but at the same time, now it is time that we awaken certain qualities in our own life expression which can help other people to evolve and find contentment and happiness in their own lives. This is the message we are trying to give to everyone along with their normal yoga routine practice and we hope that in the course of time, when we are able to inculcate these qualities, our perceptions and behaviours and attitudes will change. With this change, we will move one step closer to attaining *poornata* in life, fulfilment in life.

This year in Munger, we have taken up certain projects. They say 'charity begins at home' so we have started our work in Bihar. The first work undertaken in January and February was to introduce yoga therapy in all the medical colleges in the state of Bihar. In this way, the new doctors, doctors of the future, will not be deprived of a yogic education and

can understand the healing and therapeutic aspects of yoga. They will learn to combine this with the normal systems of treatment. In Bihar alone, there are nine medical colleges. Depending on our own busy schedule, we plan to conduct a program every month in different medical colleges. Reports on the program have been most successful and encouraging, so much so that the doctors in Bihar have signed a petition to the Indian Medical Council in New Delhi to make yoga a part of the national syllabus. That is one project we have undertaken.

A second project is under consideration by the State Government right now. We propose that all medical professionals in the state of Bihar, government and private, undergo a yoga therapy program so they can become acquainted with the principles of yoga therapy. They will be given a certificate from the ashram stating that they have undergone this yoga therapy program. If they don't want to come, then their license will be revoked. In the state of Bihar, there are about 16,000 government medical professionals and they are now starting to trickle in for fear of losing their license. I think it is a very good start that the medical professionals become aware of the yogic heritage which can also promote health, not only the curative aspect but also that they be aware of the preventative and health-promoting aspects of yoga. If this works out well, and we are confident that it will, then I think there will be a dramatic change in the treatment of patients, not only in Bihar but in the nation as a whole, in the next five to ten years.

The third project we have undertaken is teaching yoga in the army. In this project we are teaching yoga to the soldiers to help them overcome mental problems. This is particularly geared for those subject to desert deployment and also for high altitude deployment. Soldiers there remain isolated for long periods and suffer a lot of psychological and psychiatric problems. For each project we have a team of swamis, a team that has been specially trained and which has gained experience in their field. The first camps were for the desert deployment and were conducted in Bikaner and Leh, Ladakh.

For the mountain deployment, a third camp was conducted in Siachen base camp. Just before coming here, I received a letter telling of the popularity of the camps. Hopefully, in other areas, specialized programs will also be taught.

The next project is teaching yoga in prisons, in all the central and state prisons in the state of Bihar, for the heart reform. Pilot studies were conducted in Patna and Bhagalpur with very good results. We have received requests from the government to conduct the yoga program in all the prisons and to take all the prisons under our heart reform program.

Our next project is 'Village-to-Village'. Until now, we have covered four villages and working hard at gaining experience. Swamis and volunteers go door-to-door to every community to find out about their social problems and their physical problems, too. The aim is to solve them, either with the help of the state government or with our own resources. This program has proved to be very popular, especially in one area of Bihar very famous for communal fights. This has been the first year in which people from all communities, not just Hindus and Muslims, but also the caste communities, have come together and taken a vow not to fight, not to lift their arms against each other. In this Village-to-Village program, we are identifying primarily the most crime-infested areas, not the settled and happy ones.

Another project is the conversion of The Bihar School of Yoga into a yoga university, the first one of its kind in the world. We started the process only in June and the state government gave its approval in 2 days' time, a miraculous record in the state of Bihar. We submitted the proposal on 22nd June and received approval on 24th June. We then applied to UGC, the University Grant Commission, through the Department of Education and we thought it would take months for the file to be processed. In less than 15 days, the file was approved by the Department of Education and sent to UGC that "Okay, you send your team to inspect and give them the formal recognition." This University will initially have three faculties of yoga: Philosophy, Psychology and Applied Yoga.

One other very important project is happening in November. There is a conference in Paris, sponsored by UNESCO, from 10th to 12th November and all the education-
alists, intellectuals and bright people of Europe will gather. It is a great honour for a sannyasin to be invited to be there to preside over it. That sannyasin happens to be myself. The hope is that a decision will be taken to incorporate yoga in the modern educational system. If that happens, very soon the structure of job-oriented education will change to human-oriented education. We look forward to that change and to that day.

With all these activities, we hope to bring about a new awareness of the yogic tradition in order to develop the sattwic nature and I think that that is the goal for which we should all work together.

Opening Granthis

29 August 1994, Prem Puri Ashram, Mumbai

I would like to mention some of the subtle aspects of yoga in relation to our personalities, so that we can understand the working of yoga in life. The working of yoga in life could also be integrated and incorporated with the practices of pratyahara and dharana. It is my firm belief that in the absence of pratyahara and dharana practices, yoga is incomplete and nothing can be achieved.

I am not a keen follower of meditation, for I know that meditation is something which we will never be able to practise or achieve in this lifetime. It is a state of inner harmony, equilibrium, balance and inner awareness, and as long as we have the body which functions with the aid of the senses and mind, meditation cannot be achieved.

This is quite obvious from the descriptions of yoga given by Patanjali in Ashtanga Yoga in which dhyana is defined as the seventh stage. Even in other yoga text books and in the upanishadic descriptions of yoga, meditation comes towards the culmination of yogic practices. It comes when we have transcended and gone beyond the realm of the senses and mind. Therefore, when we say in the day-to-day usage of words that we 'practise meditation', in my opinion we are giving a totally incorrect description of what we are trying to do. One cannot practise meditation at all because it is a state of *Advaita*, it is a state of oneness between the individual and the cosmic reality or the self. We do not have the capacity to understand this advaitic approach because there are many different

barriers which have to be overcome in our own expressions of life, in our own expressions of personality and behaviour.

If and when one begins to understand the Advaita system of evolution, I am using the word evolution and not philosophy, if one begins to understand this Advaita system, then at that stage, intuitive faculties play a very predominant role rather than the intellectual faculties. Intellect leads to the clouding of the mind, the clouding of knowledge and intellect leads to deviation of action which is performed in good faith. I'll give you one example. A man goes to a guru and says, "I wish to attain higher knowledge. Please guide me on the path." The guru says, "No, it is not possible to guide anybody in higher knowledge." Once a person asked Paramahamsaji also, whether it is possible to attain self-realization in this life or not and he gave a very straightforward answer. He said, "No, one cannot and can never attain self-realization." The person was taken aback and said, "How can this be possible, when all the philosophies and religious systems speak of attaining this higher realization?" Paramahamsaji explained to him that what we know as higher reality or realization of the higher self, is something transcendental and the human mind and the human brain is definitely not transcendental. The systems which exist in the world today, whatever they may be, they simply guide one to achieve a transcendental state of brain and mind. These systems give instructions on how to transform the limited nature of mind and brain, the limited knowledge into transcendental knowledge.

Once the brain and mind have been transformed, then there is no need to seek that transcendental experience; it dawns naturally and spontaneously without any effort, and that has been the concept of yoga; that has been the concept of Tantra; that has been the concept of Samkhya; that has been the concept of Vedanta. Through effort, work to change yourself without aspiring to know something which is beyond perception. Once the change happens within yourself, you will know what is to be known.

So, this person who comes to the guru says, "I want to attain higher wisdom, self-realization, please guide me." The

guru says in very straightforward terms, “It is not possible”, but the person was insistent. He was one of us, you and me, and he said, “No, you have the strength, you can give me shaktipat, you can give me mantra and you can definitely make me one with God in one moment’s time, and I insist that you shower your grace upon me.” When this chela began to insist more and more, more and more, more and more, the guru eventually thought, “Why bother, he is such a headache anyway, let me give a mantra.” So he gave him a mantra and said, “You practise this mantra, but don’t only practise it, you live it; don’t only live it, you express it in your thoughts, in your behaviour, in your actions.”

Actually, I’m at liberty to tell you what that mantra was because you are welcome to try it also. The mantra was *Aham Brahmasmi* – “I am the Supreme Self”, and this new devotee, full of zeal and inspiration, sat down and started to repeat the mantra *Aham Brahmasmi* and in the course of time, he began to live it, he began to express it in action, in behaviour, in thought, in speech.

One day the guru called that person and said, “I want you to go to market to buy some vegetables”, so this devotee, this aspirant, took some money from the guru, took a bag and off he went to the market. On the way, he saw that everyone was running in the opposite direction, and he enquired, “What happened? Why is everyone running away?” People said, “There’s a mad elephant in the market who is destroying everything in its path and it is better that we all get out of its path and remain safe!”

Now this aspirant thought, “Very well, the elephant is part of the Supreme Self, it has the same spirit, it has the same nature, it has the same quality of Brahma that I have within me and if I am able to converse psychically with the elephant, ‘you are the same as me’, then he won’t harm me. I mean, if you put two flames together what will happen? They will become one because they are not opposite, it is the same substance, the same quality merging into one.” So he continued walking and he came face-to-face with the elephant. Unfortunately, the elephant was not in a very sattvic mood and the elephant

had not received this mantra. So, you can guess the result. This aspirant ended up in the hospital with broken legs, with broken arms, with broken neck, blood flowing everywhere. He needed stitches all over his body.

Eventually, he limped back to the ashram without his vegetables. The guru said, "What happened? You had gone to the market. Did you get involved in some fight, and where are the vegetables?" The aspirant abused the guru left, right and centre. He said, "What kind of idiotic guru are you? I come to you and you ask me to do this, and look at my condition!" The guru said, "Calm down and tell me what happened." So the aspirant told his guru the entire story from the time he left the ashram till the time he returned to the ashram in many pieces. After listening to the story, the guru says, "You missed a very vital point. If you claimed that you had become one with divinity and that was your conviction, then why did you not see the divinity in the person who was warning you away? Was he not part of the divinity? And did he not come before the elephant to warn you of it?" You see, these kinds of mistakes we always make in our life, because our brain and mind and personality do not have the ability to transform themselves to be receptacles of the higher energy. A lot of work has to be done.

There are many, many barriers and unfortunately, these people who follow the yogic path or any form of spiritual path, immediately try to subdue and control their mind. Even yogis say that controlling the chitta vritti is the final and ultimate, but that is not final and ultimate, rather it is the beginning on the path of yoga. Why?

There are many barriers between an individual and the higher reality: one of the barriers is chitta, another is ahamkara, another is manas, and yet another is buddhi. Apart from this, there are other barriers too, and tantra speaks of these barriers in the form of *granthis* or knots. Granthi is generally translated as a knot. Tie a knot in a piece of string or rope and that knot represents a particular state of mind in relation to our personality, a state of being which restricts and limits our natural inner expressions.

When the natural and inner expressions are limited, restricted, then we are in one form of bondage. Tantra says that there are three *granthis* in the human personality: one is known as *Brahma granthi*, the knot of Brahma; another is *Vishnu granthi*, the knot of Vishnu; the third is *Rudra granthi*, the knot of Shiva. Now these also represent an area, a dimension where the qualities of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva manifest most actively.

The qualities of Brahma

What are the qualities of Brahma? Let us take it step-by-step. According to kundalini yoga, in our body there are many chakras, minor and major chakras. Major chakras are known as mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and ajna. These are the six chakras and sahasrara is the seventh one, the maha chakra, the centre of all the other minor ones and these six major chakras. Now out of these, mooladhara and swadhisthana belong to the dimension of Brahma granthi. These two chakras represent the area where the faculty and quality of Brahma manifest most actively in the invisible dimension. In the conscious dimension, Brahma is known as the Creator. He is one of the Gods of the Hindu Trinity, wherein one represents the creator, another the preserver and another the destroyer. The creator is Brahma.

At the same time, the tradition speaks of some instincts which are very powerful and which can overpower every kind of effort and attainment and quality that a sadhaka or an aspirant can achieve through the process of sadhana in the course of his life. Brahma in the physical dimension represents the urge of procreation, the original desire, "I am one, let me become many." That was the original thought of God and as a result of His thought of becoming many, look at the mess He has created in the world! We are a result of that thought. This urge of becoming many is an instinct, the process of procreation, the process of generation. Many times, even in the highest spheres of realization, this instinct overpowers all kinds of spiritual attainments. Therefore, tantra has been very specific, and many people don't like

it, but it is one of the facts of life, to sublimate the sexual urge, the aspect of *maithuana*. This has been one of the basic instincts to overcome.

One of the major instructions and teachings of the tantric systems is the sublimation of natural urges which define an individual being. In Brahma granthi the two chakras, mooladhara and swadhisthana, represent the manifest dimension and the unconscious dimension, where the seed of karma, the seed of desire is hidden. Note that in this process of yogic sadhana, as one progresses into higher states of pratyahara and dharana, there comes a time when we need to let go of the desire for gaining special experiences. Instead we need to transcend and open the knots to these three areas.

Some of you might have been present in the morning class and noticed that we were practising a technique known as ajapa japa dharana. It was not the practice of ajapa japa. It was a different form of the ajapa japa practice, of pratyahara. Ajapa japa dharana is a practice of the dharana system. One of the stages of this dharana system is to awaken the granthis; to undo the granthis so that sublimation can be attained. Through concentration of will and awareness and knowledge, these changes do happen in our personality. The act of procreation, the sexual urge in meditation is a very powerful force. Mythology is full of stories of people who have attained the highest level of realization, like Sage Vishwamitra. He had done a lot of austerity, but he had not controlled or sublimated the Brahma granthi, the unconscious nature. Therefore, he got caught up in worldly experiences of attachment and we know the result, Shakuntala was born!

What I am trying to say here is that in our process of sadhana, we have to go through these stages. We cannot consider consciousness to be the ultimate and the final, but energy also. Yoga describes a concentration of energy, consciousness, at each level or chakra. In each chakra there is a defined expression of energy and a defined expression of consciousness.

Just as there are three granthis in our body, there are three stages of consciousness, represented in the form of the

Shivalingam. We are the luminous lingam. Lingam represents a stage of consciousness. Granthi represents a stage of energy, from manifest to unmanifest to transcendental, so we are not talking about states of consciousness right now; we will discuss that later. We are talking now of the transformation of shakti.

In mooladhara and swadhisthana, the energy is a downward-moving force. As the energy moves down, procreation takes place. As the energy moves down, creation takes place. Now, in order to reverse it so that it can be transmuted, one has to stop that instinct which is controlled and governed by the sexual urge. Intense sadhana has to be done, more specifically, the dharana practice.

The yoga upanishads, yoga kundalini upanishads, sulika upanishads and many other upanishads describing the process of yoga, have greatly emphasized the dharana system. They say that there are three spaces: the space in the head, chidakasha; the space in the heart region, hridayakasha; and the space in the lower regions known as daharakasha.

Brahma granthi and the black lingam belong to the realm of daharakasha, so the practices of dharana combined with the practice of kriya and kundalini, can help one sublimate the Brahma granthi, the first instinct. The second instinct is encountered when we reach the manipura level, Vishnu granthi. Vishnu granthi is the area where sustenance is provided to the body, to the mind, to the emotions and to the entire personality. Energies to sustain the body are created in this region. Manipura and anahata chakra, these two belong to the realm of Vishnu granthi, the level of maya, which is governed by Vishnu's energy ruling manipura and anahata.

Now, we know that the food we eat is converted into energy in our body, and this energy is then distributed throughout the body and therefore we feel strength and dynamism. Whatever we eat is converted, is transformed into energy in the manipura region, for that is the centre of preservation, of sustenance. It aims at preservation of the body because to stop eating is going to cause mental vagueness, loss of strength and the entire system will be affected – the body, the brain and the mind.

Anahata chakra deals with emotions and nurtures our inner self, our inner being. The feeling of contentment, the feeling of satisfaction, the feeling of wellbeing are necessary. They are a must in order to have perfect mental health. If there is absence of the feeling of wellbeing, if there is absence of the feeling of satisfaction, of contentment, the mental health is going to be affected. Anahata chakra nurtures the mental body and this is the realm of Vishnu granthi. This is the instinct known as *ahara*. There are four instincts, natural instincts, which constantly affect our actions and the entire nature: *ahara*, *maithuna*, *bhaya* and *nidra*.

The third granthi is Rudra granthi. Rudra granthi is the centre of vishuddhi and ajna chakras. What happens at vishuddhi and ajna? They are centres of change. We call them the centres of knowledge, we call them centres of transformation, we call them the centres of transcending the material dimension and establishing oneself in the spiritual dimension. Ajna chakra converts intellectual knowledge into intuitive knowledge. It creates a change in the perception of human personality. When the change takes place, this transformation of comprehension, this transformation of awareness, this transformation of knowledge and breaking away from the old pattern and adopting a new pattern, a new vision, new cognition is with the functioning Rudra granthi.

Vishuddhi represents the ether element. There is a statement in the Vedas and this statement has been accepted by every other school of thought. The ether element and space is Brahma. Space is an element where the possibility for growth of every other element exists. This building has come up in space, our body comes up in space, every kind of growth has happened in space. In the absence of space, there would be no growth at all, and this is one of the major qualities, a unique quality of this space element.

Earth cannot exist without space and evolution of the earth element happens in space. Water cannot exist in the absence of space, fire cannot burn in the absence of space, wind cannot blow if there is absence of space. Space is the basis, the centre which nourishes all the other manifestations

of energy in the form of elements. It provides the basis for their evolution and their growth.

These two centres, vishuddhi and ajna, are governed by Rudra granthi. The word *rudra* is derived from the Sanskrit root 'rut' which means 'to cry, to weep'. Crying happens, weeping happens. When we have to detach ourselves from something, why do we cry? It is because of some form of attachment. A child cries for toys. A child instinctively develops an attachment with toys, and when it can't get a toy, it is because of that attachment and knowing that, 'I can't get it,' the child cries.

When do we cry, the grown-ups? When an expectation is not fulfilled, when whatever is desired is not attained. When somebody dies, it means that there is a break in our attachment, there is a break in our expectation, there is a break in our desire for something. Rudra granthi is a very apt name because it is here, in ajna chakra and at the level of vishuddhi chakra, that we realize the growth of the entire life process, the evolution of the entire life process, the cutting off of attachment with the manifest world, the instincts. Then establishing oneself in a new level of understanding takes place. Rudra granthi controls the instinct of fear, *bhaya*, in the form of deep psychic insecurity. People say that insecurity belongs to mooladhara chakra, that the feeling of security and insecurity belong to mooladhara chakra, but that is physical insecurity. Insecurity related with our nature belongs to ajna chakra: the fear of the unknown and unable to take a step ahead, knowing that there is an absence of knowledge and understanding, awareness and perception. The three instincts: maithuna, ahara and bhaya are in these three dimensions.

Now there is a fourth instinct, nidra. I had mentioned yesterday that *nidra* does not mean sleep, it means absence of consciousness and it also means when one withdraws oneself into a shell of security where one feels comfortable. Nidra is a very tamasic vritti. It is not a sattvic vritti. When you withdraw yourself from everything and you want to feel comfortable and you want to be satisfied and happy and not confront the reality which is in front, then that is the state of nidra. This

instinct of nidra is felt in all the levels of the chakras and of the granthis. In the physical dimension nidra is sleep. In the subtle dimension, nidra is unconsciousness. In the causal dimension, nidra is the withdrawing of attention and awareness into an area where the changes are not experienced.

There are induced nidras – anaesthesia for example. When you are under the effect of anaesthesia, a person can do anything to your body, chop it up and sew it back together again and you won't even notice it. Why? It is because that is an induced state of nidra, induced by a chemical. The *Yoga Sutras* state very clearly that an altered state of mind can also be caused by *aushadhi* which means medication. Whether it is hormonal in composition or chemical in composition, it doesn't really matter. This inducement of an altered state of consciousness where one becomes oblivious of the external, physical or mental experience, is the state of nidra. This nidra is felt in the region of Brahma granthi along with the instinct of maithuna. This nidra is experienced in the region of Vishnu granthi along with the instinct of ahara. This nidra is also experienced in the region of Rudra granthi along with the instinct of fear.

Nidra is the hardest and the last instinct to overcome. It is one of the hardest instincts to overcome because it connects the expression of energy with the expression of consciousness. If you want to block off an experience of energy then along with that, consciousness also has to be blocked. If consciousness remains active, then this is not nidra. If you are sleeping at night and if the awareness is maintained all throughout the night that 'I am lying in bed and sleeping,' then in the morning, you will feel very funny. You will feel that you have not slept at all. When the body slept, the energy slept, became relaxed, calm, balanced, but because the consciousness was active, you had the knowledge that 'this is happening to me.' It can happen the other way around too. Consciousness may sleep, but if the energies are active, then when you wake up in the morning, you still feel tired. Many times when we go to bed at night, we go to bed with worries, anxieties, thoughts, frustrations. Hyperactivity in the realm

of energy continues, so when you wake up in the morning, despite having slept for 12–14 hours, you still feel exhausted mentally, tired mentally, and you don't know the cause because you have slept well. There is disharmony between the expressions and the manifestations of consciousness and energy which leads to an imbalance in the state of nidra.

What is the aim of yoga nidra? Let us take this as an example, because it is a technique of pratyahara and it is something with which we are all familiar. When we lie down and start rotating our mind, our awareness, our concentration, first in the physical body from one part of the body to the next, rotation of consciousness through different parts of the body, that is relaxing the physical energy, balancing the physical energy. After that, we move into some mental activity like bringing up certain memories, visualizing something, making a sankalpa, awakening the feelings of heat, cold, lightness, heaviness, etc. These are techniques to balance the mental hyperactivity so that body and mind relax simultaneously. This does not happen in normal sleep, in the normal state of nidra. When the energy and the consciousness which governs the body and the mind relax simultaneously, then this is the state of yoga nidra which begins in a very simple way.

As a sadhaka, whatever practice you do on an external level and also at the level of instinct and energy, it is important to understand the simplicity of the yoga practices, not only in terms of something – a great change happening in the realm of consciousness externally – but also to be aware that you are sitting down, you are practising this, you are practising that, and from where you are, you will see the light. One has to be alert because only when you have been able to harmonize the energy, can you then begin to work at the level of consciousness.

Energy is primary, consciousness is secondary. Therefore, in yoga, more specifically hatha yoga for laymen, it is described in two forms: solar energy, the vital energy, the active energy, and in the form of the passive energy, lunar energy – *pingala* and *ida*. Pingala energy or prana shakti governs the physical manifestation, the physical expression, and ida energy or chitta

shakti governs the mental manifestation, the subtle manifestation. This manifestation is of prana and chitta, the purusha, prakriti, shiva, shakti, brahma, maya, whatever name we may want to give, these are the realities which govern our lives.

Let me clarify these things. The pratyahara technique is for harmonizing, balancing and controlling the activity which is happening through the senses. For example, a turtle. Pratyahara has been described as a turtle pulling all its limbs into the shell. That is the traditional description of 'How many limbs does a turtle have outside its shell?' Six. Two arms, two legs, one tail and one head which represent the jñanendriyas and the karmendriyas. The indriyas total five. The head represents the sixth organ which is the mind. In the *Bhagavad Gita* even Lord Krishna has stated clearly that in the realm of prakriti, the individual being manifests with the help of six indriyas. Karmendriyas along with the mind, along with the six senses including the mind, the jiva manifests in the realm of prakriti. And withdrawing these sensory organs into a nature where there is total harmony and balance, is the aim of pratyahara. Therefore, the description of a turtle withdrawing its limbs within its shell is apt. The many techniques which we have in pratyahara, aim at quietening the activity, the hyperactivity of the senses, including the mind.

In dharana, a slightly deeper approach is adopted. We have withdrawn the senses but now we have to quieten and tranquilize the energies which govern the senses. In dharana, many names may be familiar such as ajapa dharana which deals with the loosening or the opening up of the granthis so that we can overcome our instincts. It deals with developing a proper understanding of the states of consciousness, awareness of the lingams which relate to the different spaces within our personality, and then sublimation takes place.

Whenever you practise therefore, please remember that there are two dimensions: one, the external, relaxing the externalized senses, and second, the internal, harmonizing the energies which govern the externalized senses. Once this concept is clear, you will be able to move into this state of dharana meditation.

Nature of Human Consciousness

30 August 1994, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai

The previous subject was about the different granthis which represent the manifestation of energy in the form of instincts, experiences and performance. Today the subject is consciousness, because consciousness is a word that nobody understands properly. There is no way to define what consciousness is. In the yogic Upanishads, the first question that is asked in relation to life is: *Kim dehah, kim prana, kim atma, kim tadam?* – “What is the body? What is prana? What is the mind? What is the soul? And what is the reason for their manifestation and their interaction in life?” It becomes difficult to answer this vast subject in brief, but an attempt has to be made. The yogic Upanishads define all these different subjects in the form of various techniques and practices and at the same time, they also say that there is a field, a cosmic field of experience, knowledge, and action. Human consciousness. is a field in which *kriya* or action, merges into *jnana*, wisdom and knowledge, and *iccha* or desire, merges into *kriya*, movement of energy and mind. It is this movement of energy and mind which has to be defined in terms of consciousness, it has to be understood in terms of consciousness.

We can relate this vast field of consciousness to an ocean. An ocean is a body of water, but due to some external factors and inner movements, the ocean is never still. There are currents, there are undercurrents, there are waves, and in these currents and undercurrents and waves, there is a great potency, there is a great energy which is a great strength. In

the same way, in this field of consciousness, subtle movements are taking place and these movements belong to iccha, jnana and kriya. Various experiences happen in the physical dimension in the form of the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious understanding, and also in the form of *turiya*, the superconscious knowledge.

There are two forms of perceptions: one is known as *drishtajnana* and the other is known as *adrishtajnana*. *Drishtajnana* is the conscious perception, something which is seen, something which is visible and *adrishtajnana* is the unmanifest or the unknown or unconscious knowledge. Now, please do not confuse the use of the word unconscious here with the normal unconscious. Here, the word unconscious means something which is not manifest, but it still exists. The existence of kriya, iccha and jnana, action, will and knowledge, are the three factors which influence the totality of consciousness. These are the factors which generate karmas and which generate samskaras. A minor thing can become a karma, a minor thing can become a samskara, a minor thing can become a habit.

Take for example, the habit of either smoking or drinking or chewing tobacco. These are converted into samskaras and karmas in the course of time. How do we begin to smoke? Either we copy somebody or there is a feeling that if I smoke, I will be on par with other people who have some status and a name and fame or just because somebody has told us, "Try, it is good, it gives you a perk, it gives you a push, it gives you a boost." And we start off with our first cigarette and that first cigarette catches on and now that simple act becomes a habit.

When that simple act becomes a habit, as long as it remains a habit, you can remove it, but when it leaves an impression in the field of consciousness, in the field of kriya, iccha and jnana, then cloudiness of mind is experienced. It becomes an impression, a karma. When we try to leave smoking we go through withdrawal symptoms and it becomes hell to manage the states of mind. It becomes impossible to manage what we are feeling. We experience states of depression, high anxiety, and nervous imbalance. So many different things

are felt in the body. So many different things are felt in the mind, sometimes we wonder how can the simple process of smoking a cigarette, if we want to leave it, affect the entire consciousness?

This effect of habit affecting the consciousness is known as *mudhavastha*, consciousness, which is subject to impressions because of not having the knowledge of the totality of jnana, kriya and iccha. It may sound a bit farfetched, a bit incomprehensible, but you see, in the yogic tradition, consciousness, or *chetana* in Sanskrit, is defined in five different categories or stages as *mudha*, dull, *kshipta*, scattered, *vikshipta*, oscillating, *ekagrata*, oscillating, and *nirodha*, cessation. *Mudha* is the impressionable consciousness, something can leave an imprint over which you have absolutely no control. An event can leave a very deep imprint. You may not remember many happy moments in your life but thirty years ago somebody has abused you and you still remember that today. You have never seen that person again in your life but the memory has become, that impression has become a *samskara* and a *karma* which you cannot eliminate. This *mudha* state of consciousness is represented in *mooladhara* and *swadhisthana* as a black lingam. What does lingam represent? Lingam is the symbol of higher consciousness which sees the external and which sees the internal and which is the master of the animal and human tendencies in life.

Mythologically, the lingam represents Shiva. If you see the image of Shiva, if you understand the meaning of the form of Shiva, then you have understood the entire definition of consciousness. How do we see the image of Shiva? As a person who is without clothes, *digambara avadhoota*; a person who does not have covering. Covering represents *maya*. The state of *avadhoota*, the state of *digambara*, represents oneness with the cosmos. Shiva, not having a covering on the body, means that the individuality is able to express its cosmic nature without any impediment. Shiva has three eyes, two eyes which see the manifest world and when the third eye becomes active, it opens, then the remaining two eyes have no function at all. Two eyes represent the duality of life: the good and the bad,

the positive and the negative but when the third eye opens, they are all destroyed, the difference is gone, it is finished. It is done with. And when the third eye opens, everything that is manifest merges into its original nature which has been symbolized in the form of ash. When matter is destroyed it adopts the nature of ash. When prakriti is destroyed it adopts the nature of ash. When the duality is destroyed, the manifest nature as we perceive it does not exist anymore, it simply becomes one element. That element, that tattwa, is ash. It is that ash which Shiva has rubbed on his body.

There is purity in that state of avadhoota and the purity is represented in the form of the Ganga flowing out of Shiva's matted locks. There is mastery over the mind which is represented by the image of the crescent moon on the forehead. And actually, the symbology of the moon is the symbology of the mind. In the Upanishads the moon and the sun are called *Rei* and *Aditya*, the mind and prana. Sun is an external energy which is required to perceive the manifest nature, and moon is the subtle energy which is necessary in order to experience the totality of consciousness. The symbology of Shiva holding the moon on the forehead means total dominance over the patterns and faculties of consciousness. Shivalingam is the symbol of Shiva; it is an effulgent consciousness, but the Shivalingam represented by the mudha state of consciousness is black. It is not luminous and it is this black Shivalingam which is used nowadays in the world. It represents the manifest nature of consciousness. In the process of sadhana, when we have to deal with the material nature of the mind, with the material manifestation of shakti, then Brahma granthi and this black Shivalingam have to be transcended. The mudha, the impressionable consciousness, has to be transformed into pure kriya. In this black Shivalingam, the quality of iccha has to be overcome.

Paramahamsaji used to say that the milestone of people progressing in spiritual life, in sadhana, is that the desires are reducing. If you cannot reduce the desires, rather, if they become more and more powerful and captivating, then you can be sure that there is something wrong in your

process of sadhana. It is necessary to be free from desires because the chetana must be pure, it cannot be stained by desire. You cannot taint the effulgent consciousness with impressions of desire, with the blemish, with the black spots of your self-oriented, selfish desires. You will know that you are progressing in your meditation when the desires become less and less and less. This reduction of desire is represented in the form of overcoming the human, the animal and the instinctive natures of consciousness which are manifest in nature and unconscious in nature also, in the form of karmas and samskaras. Samskaras represent desires. Karmas represent the impression of those desires.

There is one meditation in pratyahara known as hamsa dhyana in which one observes the desires and tries to eliminate them through a process of analysis and isolating the selfish from the universal qualities. When this happens, the pattern of perception, the pattern of mind, the pattern of behaviour changes. The colour of the Shivalingam changes from black and it becomes smoky. When the consciousness is defined as a smoky Shivalingam, it symbolizes a state or frame of mind where kriya and jnana become predominant; iccha is left behind. So, in the first stage of spiritual enlightenment please remember, desires have to become less and not increase.

Even Buddha used to say that if you want to attain enlightenment you have to leave behind the desire to become enlightened because desire is a tamasic nature. Desire or iccha, is the tamasic, self-centred, self-oriented nature of consciousness. When only kriya and jnana remain in the life of an aspirant, then one moves in the world, lives in the world, but is not of the world. This state is known as *videha avastha*, being in the body but not being attached to the body, being in the world but not being attached to the world.

It is precisely this instruction that Lord Krishna has given in *Bhagavad Gita*. Lord Krishna says, "Accept that while you live in the world you have to act in a certain way, behave in a certain way, relate to other people in a certain way, that is acceptable, but do not remain attached to the results." Attachment to results represents an aspect of iccha and

when you are not attached to the world, action is only being performed in a non-attached way, then that becomes kriya.

Kriya changes the perception of consciousness. It elevates the consciousness from its animal tendencies, its tamasic tendencies, from pashu bhava to veerabhava. *Veera bhava* meaning the attitude of a warrior and in this state, karmas are performed, actions are performed, understanding is achieved without any attachment to the process of understanding, expectation or desire. This can be attained in the yogic framework with the practice of hridayakasha dharana.

This morning, the meditation that was taught was directed to the experience of the lingams in our personality. What we have been practising in the morning is the basic foundation which has to be evolved and developed in the course of our practice in life, but the first step has to be taken. After you have perfected hridayakasha dharana, even actions drop away because up to vishuddhi, life rotates around kriya and iccha. After vishuddhi, life becomes full of jnana and this has been represented in yoga in the form of *jyotirlingam*, universal consciousness, homogeneous consciousness, where an individual experiences the universality and totality of existence, of life. It is here that samadhi becomes a definite possibility. Previously, it was not a definite possibility; it was a speculative possibility. Previously mukti or nirvana was not something that could happen but something one would aspire for; however, after the karmic and the iccha influence has been overcome, realization becomes a definite possibility.

Please remember I am using the words 'definite possibility' which may contradict each other, because on one hand I am saying 'definite', and on the other I am saying 'possibility'. The contradiction is only in terms of intellect. The fact remains, it depends on your effort – how far you wish to go. And how far one wishes to go is very difficult to define. It can only be understood in the form of an *adarsh*, an ideal which a saint or sage can provide us with.

Take for example the life of our own guru, Swami Satyananda. In his life we find that he had attained everything there was to attain while he was living in the world. Of course

he never showed it, he never projected that he knew what he had attained. In reality, if he tried to do anything it was to hide himself as much as possible, but there are people who have, from time to time, seen a glimpse of his universal nature and wondered 'Why is he hiding it?' But in his own words he says that the universal nature is something which cannot be expressed by the normal mind. It has to express spontaneously without any effort.

What we do when we begin our sadhana is we adopt a lifestyle, we adopt a philosophy and we try to become a prophet overnight. When we try to become a prophet overnight, there is no control over the head and because there is no control over the head by becoming a prophet, we seek profit. If we are seeking profit, desires have not been subdued; one of the basic requirements of spiritualization has not been fulfilled. So how can we become prophet? In order to become a prophet, you do not have to try, you simply have to be. You see there are two states: the process of becoming, 'I will try to become,' and the process of being, 'I am what I am.' We go through a lot of head-trips and hassles, problems and difficulties, attainments and happiness, and these states are continuously changing, but in the state of being you reach a nirlipta state. This state of being is not videha avastha; it is jivanmuktavastha. *Jivanmuktavastha* means transcending each and every experience of life and in the transcendence, in the process of transcendence, what one has attained has to be renounced. I always say that renunciation is not a difficult thing. It happens very naturally, it happens very spontaneously, and you do not even have to think that you have renounced. Actually, that renunciation or *tyaga* does not exist in the world as an effort we try to achieve; that is the wrong concept. The best example which can explain that renunciation does not exist and cannot exist, is that when you climb up the stairs, you do not leave the first step; the previous step leaves itself. As you climb, you attain, and as you find, things drop away and that is the reality of life. Therefore, you do not have to concern yourself with renunciation, rather it can be said that renunciation is something experienced

after attainment. Once you attain, you leave behind what is unnecessary and therefore the spiritual process is not of renunciation, but of attainment.

In the life of Paramahamsaji we see that a person who has attained moves by the will of God. A person who has come to that level of inner effulgence is not directed by whims of the mind but moves by the will which controls, guides and directs the entire universe. In this process a great transformation takes place in our behaviour. The *Yoga Sutras* have defined this in a very beautiful way, that is, the transformation which takes place in the human personality after having attained samadhi, prajna or enlightenment. This state is not of isolation, and if yoga teaches isolation then I would be the first person who would say 'no' to yoga. If samadhi was the aim of yoga then I would stop practising yoga immediately, because I do not want yoga to become a self-centred and self-oriented process.

Yoga must lead to the experience of universal consciousness, and when the universal consciousness is expressing itself within the individual consciousness, we do not retain our normal pattern of behaviour, thought, or action and performance in life. The senses are the same. The medium through which this universal consciousness expresses is the same. The body, mind and brain are the same, but the quality is different, the quality changes. One has to understand that quality in the form of gunas, not sattwa, rajas and tamas, but of gunas which induce a creativeness to life, a positivity to life and which bring one closer to other human beings.

What are these qualities? These qualities are of love, affection, compassion and devotion, and these qualities have to be understood because they create a different form of interaction between people. If you feel spiritual love, then you will not be attached to the feeling of love, or to one person for whom you are feeling love. If one does not know how to love, then one does not know how to feel compassion, one does not know how to feel affection and one does not know how to express devotion.

Our concept of expressing these qualities are inaccurate and there is an expectation in our expression of love,

compassion, affection and devotion, too. There is a motivation behind it. Swami Sivananda used to call this *vyabhicharini avastha*, fluctuating and flirting in love. We all do that, so much so that nowadays it has become the fashion to change our husband and wife like we change our car and motorbike. In this *vyabhicharini avastha* there is a generation of *raga* and *dvesha* – *asakti*. There has to be a process of sublimating the effect of *asakti* and sublimation is the key word here. It is necessary to change this *vyabhicharini*, this flirting nature of human consciousness. The nature of human consciousness is to identify with *nama*, *roopa* and *guna*, name, form and quality. This is the natural tendency of *prakriti*. If you are unable to recognize a form, a quality, a name, you cannot live in the dimension of *prakriti*. In the state of *jivanmukti*, the mind functions at this gross level, but understanding happens at superior levels. The mind and the senses act at the gross level, but vision is of a higher level. Even after *samadhi* there is a process by which you train yourself in order to express this universal nature. In this training process you have to become one with the state of enlightenment. Now this is a very beautiful and peculiar concept of yoga. You become one with the process of enlightenment; however, at the same time you act on two different levels. We do that in our normal life also.

How does an elderly person interact with a child? By becoming like a child. A child cannot become an elderly person because the level of understanding, the level of evolution is different, but an elderly person can act and behave like a child, with a child, while at the same time retaining maturity and clarity of mind. In the same way, the performance of realized beings is of this nature. They have a higher level of understanding, a higher maturity of consciousness, but they act according to the level which we understand and accept. If you try to behave in an elderly fashion with a child who is trying to play with you, the child is not going to understand at all. Rather there will be a split and a shock in the personality, in the mentality of the child. In the same way, transformation of the qualities, becoming one

with the state of enlightenment, merging with God at one level and acting normally at another level is a very difficult thing to do intellectually, yet once you reach that state it becomes natural and spontaneous.

One thing that really works at this level is the inspiration one receives from the higher energy of God, because here God does not maintain name, form or quality. Here, God does not manifest in the form of either Devi or Devata, but becomes an impersonal God representing the three qualities of 'Generation', with a capital 'G', 'Organization', with a capital 'O', and 'Destruction', with a capital 'D'. These three qualities then dominate the human nature. It is the same concept that Maharishi Aurobindo used to say, that 'man could become a superman'. What is the meaning of superman? Having the highest of realization, but acting in a very normal, down-to-earth way. This is what I have seen in the life of Paramahamsaji, that despite having attained the highest levels of understanding, knowledge and realization, when you would go to him, he would speak to you at your level. He will joke with you at your level, he will play with you at your level. This is the human quality, and it is this quality that we have to aspire for through yoga, not self-isolation.

This is the culmination of yoga, in the form of transcending the gross state of consciousness, the *mudha avasthi*. That is becoming a *videha mukta*, one who has gone beyond the bondage of body and defences, and then becoming a *jivanmukta*, one who has gone beyond the bondage of maya and prakriti. We can all aspire for this attainment. We can all achieve it without any doubt. The only thing is you have to try, and not try superficially, but make the effort. If you make this effort you can, and when you begin to make the effort then divine grace or guru's grace definitely guides you in the form of inspiration, and it is this inspiration which I have seen in Paramahamsaji's life and which I get from him, too. It is this inspiration which counts the most. I have had the opportunity to see Paramahamsaji in every role: in the role of administrator, in the role of teacher, in the role of a guru, but the best role I have seen him enact is that of an

inspirer who has taught that no matter how many times you fall, always get up smiling and laughing and continue walking; do not cry. This is the inspiration which we should derive in our own life through the practices of yoga.

I have tried to describe the yogic process without confining myself to any specific subject, either of kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, prana vidya or this or that because I feel very strongly that now it is high time we evolve a different vision of the yogic system which unites different personalities and different beings together and does not allow you to become self-centred and self-oriented beings. If you can do only this, I assure you that you will see the culmination of yoga in your life. When you go from here, please remember that while asana and pranayama and other techniques are necessary for physical and mental wellbeing, at the same time we should set our targets and aim to reach that target, at least once before you leave the body.

Yoga – A System for the Development of Human Personality

30 August 1994, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre School,
Mumbai, Chembur

Yoga must move beyond the traditional concept of being a spiritual science meant only for renunciates. Yoga also has to move beyond the normal social concept of being a physical science meant only for therapy and health. In our own understanding of yoga, the dimensions and vision of yoga are very broad. In fact, the original aim of yoga, which is seen in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, in *Gheranda Samhita*, in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Yoga Vasishtha*, is a system for the development of human personality, controlling the mind and disciplining the human nature.

Disciplining the human nature and controlling the mind are the two ideas which form the basis of both the yogic tradition and its systems of practices. If there is anything that we lack today in society and in our own life, it is self-discipline and control of the mind.

How do self-discipline and control of the mind relate to the practices of yoga? We need to have a practical view, not just a philosophical view, as to how we can discipline our personality and control the modifications and the various altered states of mind. Many people say that meditation is the answer in its varied stages of *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *dhyana*, and many people try to practise meditation to overcome their shortcomings, but I feel that meditation is not the answer. Meditation is a process by which we first of all, can become aware of life in its totality by increasing the aspect of awareness.

Awareness is an important aspect of our life expression. No expression is complete in the absence of awareness. Awareness is not simply a process of observation. Along with awareness many other states are experienced. One state is mental one-pointedness and in reality, mental one-pointedness defines the state of awareness. If you are not one-pointed, if you are restless, if your mind jumps from one idea to another, from one thought to another, from one concept to another, then that is the state of *vikalpa*, oscillation of the mind. This state of *vikalpa* has been defined as a *chitta vritti*, a modification of mind, by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*. So one-pointedness of mind is to be attained in order to experience awareness and to attain self-discipline. For this, various practices have been defined in yoga in the form of *pratyahara* and *dharana* techniques. We know that we are attaining a one-pointed state of mind by seeing that, in the process of our meditative practices, there is greater control over the experiences derived from the senses and the mind.

Controlling speech and the senses

Yoga speaks of three controls, three *sanyams*. The first is *vani sanyam*, which means ‘control over speech’. ‘Speech’ as used here does not just mean the act of vocalizing a phrase, a sentence or a word, rather speech is the process of interaction that happens between one individual and another. Right now I am interacting with you through the medium of speech, and this interaction is not only verbal, it is happening on many dimensions: the mental, rational, analytical, intellectual and physical dimensions, and so on. The entire personality, the entire concept, belief and thought process is expressing itself through the medium of speech.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna mentioned that a person interacts through the mind, *manas*; through speech, *vach*; and through intellect, *buddhi*. *Manas*, *vach* or *vani*, and *buddhi* are the three modes of interaction between people, between an individual and society, and between an individual and the cosmos. Of these, the first *sanyam*, the first control, is over the process of interaction which is manifesting externally.

When we are able, or when we make an effort to control this process of interaction, it is known as *indriya sanyam*, control over the senses. Vani sanyam is a part of indriya sanyam.

One-pointedness of mind, one-pointedness of thought, is achieved by indriya sanyam. Control of the senses is attained after the mind is focused and fixed. The immediate symptom of that balanced personality is control of the *indriyas*, the channels which direct the forces of our personality. For example, the *jnanendriyas*, the five organs of perception are: the ears, eyes, nose, skin and tongue. They give us the capacity to hear, see, smell, feel and taste. The different *karmendriyas*, the organs of action, include: the vocal cords, hands, feet, reproductive organs and anus. These provide us with a deeper understanding of the environment in which we live, and are necessary for our continued interaction with it. The senses continually interact with the mind, so if there is restlessness in the senses, the mind is going to be disturbed. Similarly, if there is disturbance in the mind, the senses are going to be disturbed, and therefore, one can never attain any form of tranquillity, peace or harmony. Thus, the first effort towards attaining control of the senses is to control speech, vani sanyam.

Controlling thoughts and the mind

The second control is over thoughts, *manas sanyam*. In the total field of the mind, thought is perceived to be the most dynamic force. It is thought which governs the actions of the body, emotions, mind, intellect and even ego, *ahamkara*. Thoughts are the perceived force of subtle energy, subtle mental movement. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali (1:2), raja yoga emphasizes this when it says: *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah* – “one has to learn how to direct and stop the thought processes.”

Ajapa japa and antar mouna are pratyahara techniques and represent different stages of the pratyahara system. For ajapa japa, sit quiet and still, focus our minds upon and observe the breath. We visualize the breath flowing between certain centres or points in the body, such as the navel and

throat, and repeat the mantra *So Ham*, which represents the sound, the *nada shakti* of movement. Yogis have maintained that wherever there is movement, there is bound to be vibration, and wherever there is vibration, there is bound to be *nada*, sound. That sound has been defined as *So Ham*, whereby *So* is in relation to the inhalation, and *Ham* is in relation to the exhalation. The ancient yogic texts and sages such as Kabir Das speak of this sound in a very poetic way:

Aisaa jaap japo man layi
So-ham so-ham surataa gayi
Chhai so sahasra ikkis sau jaap
Anaahat upaje aape aap

The mind has to be fixed in the awareness of breath and mantra in such a manner that the breath begins to naturally and spontaneously chant the mantra *So Ham*.

This is a poetic statement made by a sadhaka who attained a degree of mental stillness, harmony and balance.

Antar mouna, another practice with which you may be familiar, is observing the thoughts and stopping the mind from thinking. It has been found that it is possible to stop the mind, and once the mind is stopped, transformation in the subtle structure of personality takes place. Control of thought is developed so that the thoughts and the expressions of the subtle energy remain harmonized and balanced, which is the aim of meditation.

Controlling actions and personality

In the course of our life we experience periods of anxiety, tension, relaxation, mental tranquillity, hyperactivity and fear. We have to control these periods which continuously and constantly affect the entire life process. This can be achieved by *karma sanyam*, control of actions, so that there is homogeneity in life. These three controls: over speech, thoughts and actions, are to be aspired for by practitioners of yoga and must be achieved if we want to progress on the yogic path.

In the beginning, we practise asana and pranayama for physical health and wellbeing. We practise some mantras, japa, meditation techniques for mental health and wellbeing. All that is perfectly all right, and they are a must, a necessity; however, eventually we have to come to a point where we can voluntarily create harmony in our entire personality.

Ladies Wing of Indian Merchants Chamber

31 August 1994, Prem Puri Ashram, Mumbai

It is an honour for me to be here with all of you, and to share some thoughts about yoga because I am a yoga teacher, however, the method of yoga that we teach at the Bihar School of Yoga is not physical, nor spiritual, nor mental; rather it is a combination of different practices under the name 'Integral Yoga'. Its purpose is to attain physical and mental health, and also spiritual advancement, to be part of human society, and to express the qualities and affinities that are inherent in our own personality. It is with this aim, with this purpose, that we teach yoga.

It goes without saying that today, humanity is at a crossroads, and not only today but ever since the industrial revolution, the mentality and behaviour and perceptions of human beings has changed a great deal. This change is not confined to one race or one society, rather it has global repercussions and everyone is trying to find a way to balance, a method to harmonize the dissipated nature of mind, attitude, behaviour.

Certain races in the world have imbibed some samskaras which assist in managing day-to-day situations. They do not allow the mind to fall into traps and they do not allow the personality to become detrimental. These races have evolved their own philosophy and are struggling against the current negative materialism to find some form of balance in life.

There are two aspects in society. One is negative and the other is positive. In the negative aspect of society, the so-called negative materialism affects the human mind in such a way

that the imbalances which occur in our life pattern influences the behaviour, the thought process, the performance, the interaction between individuals and it limits the expression of the natural qualities. Yoga calls the negative materialism a form of *bandhan* or bondage, not in a spiritual or religious sense, but bondage of mind. This is where mind is unable to see what lies beyond the day-to-day expressions.

When this is experienced in life, the first thing to come to the forefront is tension, anxiety, frustration, depression. This tension, this anxiety, this frustration, this depression is the cause of physical, mental, emotional, psychic and even spiritual suffering. This concept of suffering being caused by tension is not an alien concept to the modern mind. It has been proven, it has been stated by science also, that today the root cause of all ailments in the world is mental anxiety, mental tension. This tension, when it becomes detrimental, leads to disruption of the natural faculties, imbalances within the physiological and psychological structure. Tension is one area in our life which we have not yet been able to understand as to how it influences the total performance of body, mind and spirit.

Even in medical sciences it has been stated that the majority of problems are psychosomatic in nature. Psychosomatic meaning problems which generate in the mind and affect the body, such as hypertension, asthma, cardiovascular problems, digestive problems and chronic diseases such as cancer. At the mental level, psychosomatic problems are seen in the form of insomnia, amnesia, not having clarity of thought or clarity of mind, not having the ability to make clear decisions, lack of willpower and lack of self-esteem.

Due to these physiological and psychological imbalances, the third aspect of our nature and personality is overshadowed, and that is the aspect of spiritual attitude and behaviour. If you speak of this in traditional terms, then yoga describes four types of suffering. These sufferings are known as *duhkha*, pain, suffering. The first two forms of suffering are *janma duhkha* and *mrityu duhkha*, suffering at the time of birth and suffering at the time of death. These are not abstract concepts

or philosophies, rather they define a particular nature of human perception and mind. *Vyadhi dukkha* is suffering or pain from disease and *jara dukha* is the suffering or pain of old age. *Dukha* are the disabilities of body and mind. This has been the traditional description of the effect and the influence of negative materialism, and the various practices of yoga aim at overcoming these different forms of suffering.

Now please do not try to analyze suffering from an intellectual viewpoint because in the yoga context, suffering does not mean hard suffering as we know it, where the total personality is shattered and we do not know what to do. Rather, according to the yogic concept, suffering is imbalance, disharmony and this disharmony leads to tensions, frustrations and ineffective performance in life. Thus, the various practices of yoga that evolved in the course of time, aimed at creating a structure of human personality which is in total harmony, total balance and perfect equilibrium and the process of attaining this balance and harmony starts off with disciplining our inner nature.

Some of you might have read the basic philosophy of yoga, the *Yoga Sutras* of Pantanjali, and according to that, many people do believe that yoga is to control the patterns of the mind; however, there is a slight discrepancy here in our understanding. Yoga aims at controlling the mind, but that is not the primary purpose, because mind is something which is a bit too far from our understanding. How do we know mind, or how do we relate with mind? It is very much an intellectual concept. When asked 'what is yoga?', Patanjali makes a statement that it is nothing but a form of discipline, and this is what I want you to understand. Discipline it is, but what kind of discipline? The word that Patanjali has used to define discipline is *anushasana*. *Anushasana* means 'to govern over the subtle dimension of human nature'. The word *shasana* means to rule, to govern and *anu*, which has been added here in the form of a prefix, means the subtle areas of human personality. So, if we ask ourselves, 'What is yoga?', the answer will be, 'It is a system which helps to discipline the subtle aspects of our nature'. If we ask again,

‘What is the purpose of this discipline?’, then the answer would be, ‘By this discipline we can control the modifications of mind, the *chitta vrittis*. These two statements of Patanjali are the most important ones concerning yoga, because definitely our nature, the total, nature, the entire expression of life in the form of performance, attitude, behaviour, rationality, feeling, the total concept of life that we have, somehow, the energies of these different states need to be channelled in one constructive, creative and positive direction.

In this context, yoga provides us with a method to come out of the negative materialism into a positive understanding of materialism. Therefore, we cannot say that yoga is escaping from life.

Our tradition speaks of four *purusharthas*, the four efforts, which every individual has to make to be fulfilled in life. The four *purusharthas* are known as: *artha*, effort to obtain emotional, social, or even financial security; *kama*, effort to fulfil the desires, the aspirations, the motivating force of life; *dharma*, effort to fulfil one’s obligations, commitments and duties in relation to oneself and other fellow beings of the cosmos; and *moksha*, effort to transcend the limited nature of mind. These four efforts are like the four tyres or wheels of a car. In normal situations, the car moves with four wheels and if and when there is a puncture, our first job is to stop the car, change the tyre, repair the puncture and then move on ahead, because we know for sure that with three wheels, the car is not going to go very far. In order to have total control over the car, and in order to have the car function at its optimum ability, all four tyres have to be proper and right. These four *purusharthas* have been defined in the yoga tradition to be similar to the four tyres of life, but what happens if two tyres are punctured and we are pulling our life, trying to drive the car, with only two healthy tyres? This mistake has been made. We do not know when, where and by whom, but this wrong tradition has continued.

Now what we have mistakenly done, is separated materialism from spirituality. We say that *artha* and *kama*, the search for external fulfilment and contentment, are the

two purusharthas to be attained by people who live in the world; dharma and moksha are the two purusharthas to be attained by recluses. Therefore, we find that our life is very much an incomplete life. We might attain a level of status, name, fame and security, but if we objectively and truly analyze our inner life, our inner nature, we will find that there is a lack of peace and harmony and there is a lack of clarity of mind.

Through the various practices, yoga aims to give one the ability to follow these four purusharthas and therefore, yoga is known as a science which helps the process of evolution, which aids in the evolutionary process. It begins with an awareness of our nature and leads to the disciplining of the personality. That is the beginning of yoga.

Now whatever practices we may do, whether they be practices of asana, practices of pranayama, practices of concentration or meditation, the physical and the meditative practices initially aim to provide us with an understanding of the actions that are being performed by the mind in its subtle aspect, by the nature, the prakriti in its subtle aspect, and the reactions happening in the outer dimension.

The terms that yoga uses to define this is in the form of *kriya* and *pratikriya*, action and reaction. We have never learned to act, we have learned how to react, and there is no human being in the world today who can act properly. If we try, if we make an effort we can improve our reactions, we can improve our interactions, but we cannot learn how to act because that basic understanding and the basic knowledge is not there. So, when we begin the yogic practices, we start off with the body, the physical practices of yoga, the *asanas*. These asanas help realign the physiological systems. They help to provide health and vitality to the physiological systems, and in this process of providing the body with health and vitality, it has been seen that many physical imbalances and psychosomatic problems are alleviated.

This is one area which science is now studying in depth in the form of yoga therapy. I am sure many of you know that yoga therapy has proved to be an effective method to

manage different kinds of illnesses and diseases such as: rheumatism, arthritis, asthma, hypertension and diabetes, to slightly more complex and chronic diseases such as cancer and even AIDS.

Now you may wonder how yoga can help people who are suffering from AIDS. I will give you an example of the latest research, done in one hospital in London with the help of medical professionals and yoga teachers of the ashram. A group of people diagnosed HIV positive were taught yoga and it was found in the initial studies completed only last year, that the growth of AIDS was stopped in quite a few of them and there were some cases in which the patient tested HIV negative after nine months of yoga practice and these studies are being developed even further. Now it is too early to claim anything and definitely yoga does not claim anything. People can claim anything but yoga does not; it goes against the principles and precepts of yoga.

If we are able to develop a proper system of practice even cases of AIDS can be stopped and helped because yoga has a very basic philosophy. It says the imbalances within the body are created by the person – lack of knowledge, misuse of the body, whatever may be the reason. The moment we are able to correct these conditions, we are able to provide a better understanding of how to use the body, how to keep it in harmony, then these imbalances automatically leave and do not bother you, they do not bother the harmony of the body or of the mind.

It is with this theory that yoga has evolved into, and is evolving into, a very effective therapeutic system. Of course one has to find the right combination because there are differences in people, in their lifestyle, in their understanding, in their environment and in their diet. Therefore, it is not possible for yoga to provide a definite and specific system, that says 'Okay, if you want to get rid of this ailment, this disease, then this is what you have to do'. Yoga has to consider many factors, and therefore, to find the right combination, it takes time. So in the physiological aspect, these have been some things that people have experienced when they adopt yoga.

Other benefits have also been seen when people adopt yoga, for example psychological development and growth, because the entire yogic system has been directed to assist this process.

We find again, after considering the human individualistic mentality and personality, that most of the problems we face in the form of tension, anger, insecurity, frustration, etc., can be helped after we have learned how to relax the agitations of mind and how to focus the mind on one point. This 'focusing of mind' is a simple idea, but it conveys a deep meaning. The faculties of mind, the dissipated qualities of mind, do not allow proper relaxation or concentration to take place. In the absence of relaxation and concentration, mental problems come up. If you look at anyone who is suffering from any kind of either mental or psychological problem, you find that their mental state is agitated, disturbed, and they are not at ease with themselves. In order to tranquilize themselves they have to resort to medications and pills and interestingly, if you put all the tranquilizing drugs on one side and other medications on the other side of a weighing scale, you will find that the tranquilizing drugs have more weight than the other forms of medication. What does this prove? That we are disturbed, agitated, our energies are dissipated, and in order to relax ourselves, in order to pacify the dissipated energies, we resort to chemical drugs, yet chemical drugs cannot and do not alter the pattern of the subtle mind. These are two different areas altogether, just as air and water are two different elements. The force of air on the surface of water can disturb the tranquillity of water. In the same way, chemicals can affect a mental state, but they cannot permanently induce change, a positive change in the mental state.

In order to attain inner relaxation, emotional, mental and psychic relaxation; in order to attain mental, psychic and emotional concentration, it becomes necessary that we adopt a different approach, a different method. This is provided by the techniques of pratyahara according to the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, where we are taught how to relax, where we are taught how to observe the various conditions of the mind, and where we are taught how to regain the lost vitality of mind.

Then the concentration of mental energy manifests in the form of willpower.

There are other beliefs in yoga which say that in order to fully develop the potential of life, you need to have control and provide direction to body and mind because they are like two bullocks of a bullock cart. One bullock is body, the other bullock is mind, and they both have to move in the same direction simultaneously. If the body moves in one direction, then you cannot go anywhere, and normally this is what is happening worldwide. We identify with the body, yet at the same time we neglect the body. We accept the mind as a controlling agent of life, but at the same time we do not take care of mind. This is the point of disagreement between yoga and normal life. One has to bring body and mind together in order to practise yoga, in order to be a normal human being.

The problems that we see in the world today, whether they be wars, personal problems, not having a clear direction in life, an understanding in life, a lack of wisdom, the reason is only one – a split between the faculties of body and mind. Due to this split in the faculties of body and mind we cannot even follow the precepts which we have evolved for our own living. There is a great difference between what we believe in, our basic philosophy of life, what we think in relation to the world, and how we perform in relation to personal needs. There are four areas into which a human being moves one by one, and these four areas of life are known as, and can be understood in the form of SWAN theory.

SWAN has four letters in it, S-W-A-N. ‘S’ stands for strength and everyone has certain strengths within themselves: creativity, a level of mastery, the power of conviction and performance, and at the same time we have certain weaknesses. ‘W’ stands for weakness, for example: lack of confidence, lack of willpower, lack of self-esteem, and so on. We all have ambitions. Some ambitions are far-fetched, imaginary, and some ambitions are the motivating force behind our achievements. We also have certain needs. There are the needs of the body, there are needs of a family which

have to be taken care of, there are social needs. In our life at different times, one area becomes more predominant and powerful. When weakness becomes predominant, it is caused by imbalance in human personality. When strength becomes predominant, it is caused by harmony of human personality. When ambitions become predominant, it is caused by an unclear mind. When needs become predominant, they are caused by necessity of life.

In your own lifestyle, if you observe carefully, I would even suggest that you make a list, no matter how many pages it is, of the strengths that you consider you have after analyzing your own life pattern; of the weaknesses you have. You do have to show any other person who you are and what you are, what you have and do not have; however, you have to know who you are. Make a list of your ambitions and make a list of your needs. Begin with elimination of the unnecessary items. Do not clutter yourself with unnecessary items. Keep your mind free. Keep your mind open and you will find in the course of time, in some cases even after one week, in some cases after one month, after identifying these areas of your expressions and needs, you will become a more relaxed, more balanced, and more creative person. When you combine the yogic principles of asana and pranayama, then your life will change for the better. I do not wish to make a statement that your life will become spiritual, because the concept of spirituality is different in yoga.

Yoga says spirituality evolves in life after there is integration in the faculties of body, mind and spirit, and it is this that we have to strive for. Of course, we have to begin somewhere. Some people ask me, "If I practise yoga, how can I help change the world?" Some people say, "I feel yoga to be a very personal process and by me practising yoga, how can I help other people who are suffering?" Well, to such questions I have no answer except one, that is – if you are able to change your life, if you are able to transform your life, if you become an ideal human being, then the essence of your life will spread and that will change other people. You light incense and put it in one corner of the room. The incense is burning in one

corner of the room, yet the scent is spreading all over the room and everyone is enjoying it. If you are attracted by the smell, you can light your own incense, in your own house, in your own place, in your own room. It is the same way with yoga practice, too.

I have tried to give you a basic understanding of yoga, because I believe that until and unless we are aware of the basic structure of yoga, we cannot practise it. A social transformation has to begin from within. If you want it to be a real transformation, if you want some form of satisfaction and contentment without working on yourself, and at the same time trying to help others, then the change does not happen. All your efforts and all your actions are simply external, which do not have far-reaching consequences.

If you look into the history of mankind, people who have done something to guide the destinies of humanity are very few, and it is those people who we follow today, whether it be Christ, Krishna, Prophet Mohammed, Rama, Buddha, Mahavira, Vivekananda or Ramakrishna. They have been isolated cases who have lit their own incense in life and we are attracted to them by the scent that is spreading from that corner where they have lived. It is this inspiration which we have to derive from the teachings of yoga and spirituality. Do not expect total change to happen immediately and instantaneously.

There is a process of psycho-history. Psycho-history is mass psychology, psychology of a group, of a community, of humanity. If you look at this psycho-history, you will see that everyone is moving in one direction, that of negative materialism, and losing contact with their inner life. The more we externalize ourselves, the more we hypnotize ourselves materially. Today we are living in a hypnosis of materialism, we want this, we want that, we want this, we want that. Nevertheless, in this process of psycho-history, those who have made an effort to come out of this material hypnosis, have shown others a path to become creative in life. Yoga is one of those paths and it is our earnest wish that you give yoga a thought and a chance. Hari Om Tat Sat.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Why do people want to overcome suffering?

It is the nature of people to want to overcome suffering, and in the course of time I am quite optimistic about it also. In the course of time, when they understand that such negative reaction leads only to suffering, then there will be a search for peace in their life, and that search will eventually lead to some motivation which will help them discover qualities within their personality.

Swamiji, do japa and mantra help in brining quietness to mind?

They do, they do, but you have to be aware of those mantras and japas and you have to perform them yourself also. You see, mind is very much a powerful force which has the ability to change the entire environment of the universe. Mind is like fire and thoughts are like masalas which you throw in the fire. Now, if in the frying pan, you fry one chilli, what happens? Everyone who is in that environment feels burning in their eyes and tears start flowing. On the other hand, if you put in something else which is pleasant, then such extreme results are not felt; rather pleasure is derived from the smell. In the same way, thoughts are masalas, mind is fire.

When thoughts are uncontrolled and not channelled properly they create disturbances and distractions. With mantras and with japa, you can change the nature and the quality of your thoughts and the quality of your mind, and thus improve the entire environment where you live.

Again, it comes down to you being part of the process of change, and not expecting somebody else to begin the process of change and you just sit back and enjoy it.

How do we develop the quality of being a witness and not immersing ourselves in our thoughts and problems?

Through meditation. That is the safest and time-tested method. There has to be a process of self-observation, self-analysis and self-direction. Observation, analysis and

providing yourself with direction will happen in a meditative state, and more specifically according to yoga, in the pratyahara state, where you establish yourself in practices such as antar mouna – the witnessing and controlling of thoughts and the stopping of thoughts. In this way you gain control over the different manifestations of the mind, one by one.

Meditation is a sure way for that. A simple form of meditation which I recommend to all of you is the following: when you go to bed at night, lie down and just relive each and every moment of the day from morning until the time you went to bed. ‘I woke up at this time and this is what I did. I had this for breakfast. I spoke like this to that person.’ Relive every moment of the entire day, minute by minute, hour by hour, from morning until night, and see how you have performed. See how you have reacted, how you have behaved, how you have thought and felt. Do this each and every night. This also becomes part of meditation and in the course of time, as you gain broader vision or awareness of your day-to-day performance and actions, you also become aware of the faults you have made. There is a natural urge to rectify those faults and that way you become a *drashta*, a witness.

If your tribe joins the band of politicians will there be rapid transformation of life on this earth?

I don't think so! They are at two opposite ends of a pole. One goes in the direction of materialism and the other goes in the direction of spiritualism. It is better not to mix the two. I feel that they should not be mixed, because the political attitude of a nation and the spiritual attitude of a nation are two distinct areas of human belief. You may belong to any political party, you may follow any political ideology, but ultimately in spiritual life you do not have to follow different ideologies, they are one. I do not have to mention it, but today you can see what happens when we try to combine spiritual ideology with political ideology. They do not mix together. They are like oil and water.

Is there a God and who has created this world?

This is a question to which I am trying to find the answer. I can give you a theoretical answer, a philosophical answer which I have read, and what I have read you have read also. So, I would request that you ask me this question when I have the answer, and I will give you an experienced answer.

Is yoga considered to be a part of Hinduism and originating in India?

When I was in Colombia from 1974 to 1976, I was quite keen to study and to know about their ancient culture, the culture of the Mayas, the Incas and the Aztecs. We did a study of the pre-Columbian civilization and similar studies were done in Scandinavian countries, in Egypt and in Greece, and we found definite proof and evidence in the form of ancient statues, which are now preserved in museums, statues that depict a yogic posture, a yogic asana.

In the past, our ashram published photographs and sketches of these statues in traditional yogic postures. There are certain literatures of these ancient cultures which describe the yogic process of meditation as well. For example, crystal gazing, *trataka*, and even different states of consciousness. From that we have inferred that once upon a time, yoga was known to the different cultures, possibly under different names, not under the name of yoga, and it was practised by people of these ancient civilizations.

Due to political upheavals, natural calamities or social change, conquests and destruction, the practices and the yogic beliefs were lost; however, they were preserved in India by the sadhus and swamis who lived in remote corners of mountains in the Himalayas.

Today the credit goes to India for again reviving the yogic tradition. If you look at it from this angle, yoga is definitely not part of Hinduism, it is part of the human heritage. Since it has been associated with a monastic order of sadhus and swamis who belonged to this part of the world, yoga is being taken as part of Hinduism and that is a misconception. It is not part of Hinduism. Rather, we can say that different present-

day religions and even the ancient religions had incorporated some aspects of yogic practices, meditations, contemplations and mantras, in their own form and ways.

For example, the mantra *Om* is chanted by Hindus; Amen is chanted by Christians; Amin is chanted by Muslims, but all three of these are the same mantra. If we do some proper research we will find that there are components of yoga in every culture, religion, belief and tradition. For this modern age, credit goes to India for reviving the yogic tradition. That is all.

In contrast to men, do women have a more natural role to play to further people's lives for this age?

Most definitely! They are the mother of people who rule the world, and they can provide their children and the future generations with proper samskaras, knowledge and understanding. There are certain qualities which come naturally to *shaktis*, to women, qualities such as love, qualities of affection, qualities of caring. They have developed their sensitivity to a very high degree, which men have not. Men are quite insensitive. I would even say that they have a greater role to play than men. Men are simply *choongas*, loudspeakers of the samskaras which they have received from their mothers. And if it was not for my mother I would not be here today!

My question is one of curiosity. What has led some of you to monastic order and sannyasa?

Yoga and sannyasa are two different things. Sannyasa is a lifestyle and we adopt it because we enjoy it. In fact, I say that it gives me better freedom of action. When I was sent abroad by my guru he told me, "Look, you do not have to feel that you are under the vows of sannyasa. If you find another lifestyle which attracts you, then you are free to live that." And these words kept coming to my mind over and over again and it made me critically analyze and look at different forms of lifestyles.

For eleven years I had thought about it, it was not an overnight decision. I thought about it and I weighed the

pros and cons of every conceivable lifestyle for eleven years. Ultimately I decided, no, sannyasa was best suited for me, because in this I could express myself most effectively and creatively and be of help, of service, to other people. At the same time, it would provide me with a base to discover my own nature.

I feel that that is the reason why people come to sannyasa. I am not talking for every sannyasin that you see in the world or that you find on the road. I am talking more of sannyasins in our organization, in our ashram. We are all young people, you can see us and our retirement age is around thirty. You see, I am not a doctor, but I can treat anyone without any problem. I am not a scientist, but I can convince the scientists to see the validity of each practice. I am not a guru, but I can convince everyone to at least be aware of themselves.

Why do sannyasins wear that dress?

So, there was one question from the back, “Why do I wear this dress?” It is my uniform just as when you go to school you have to wear a certain uniform. When you go to the army you have to wear a uniform. When you go for surgery you have to wear a uniform. In the same way, when you come for sannyasa, you have to wear a uniform, and this uniform is a symbol, it is a guide to the direction and the path which you are walking.

In your earlier talk I heard something about meditation. I would like you to expand a bit more on that.

I will try to keep it as simple as possible so that it is comprehensible. According to yoga, there are three stages of mental concentration. The first stage is of pratyahara and the second stage is of dharana. These different intensities of concentration of mind represent a change that is taking place in the mind and the mental processes. Adjustment, adaptation, transformation, fixation, realization – this is the process of pratyahara and dharana meditations and these are the meditations which are actively practised in our normal yogic sadhana.

In the yogic system we have meditations of pratyahara and dharana. Observation, knowledge, transformation, adaptation, adjustment. It is the meditation of change that we are talking about. Change in the thinking process, change in behaviour, change in attitude, change in belief, development and attainment of knowledge. Whatever you may want to achieve can be achieved with these two.

When you come to the seventh stage of Pantanjali's ashtanga yoga, dhyana has also been given a separate and distinct status, as then the effort of dhyana yoga is to become sattwic. From tamasic to sattwic and from rajasic to sattwic, implying that you have already passed through the previous two stages, pratyahara and dharana, where you have observed yourself, where you have obtained some mastery over yourself, where you have adapted yourself to a way of life, where you have adjusted yourself in relation to the society and the whole. Then comes dhyana yoga and that is the change of quality, the guna, from tamasic into sattwic, from rajasic into sattwic. Tamasic qualities are generally known as lethargy, stagnation and so on, but tamas in relation to our meditative state represents a conditioning of mind which we do not want to leave. If you have to leave that, it creates insecurity, it creates fear – the fear of change, deep change – not because we fear mental or emotional change, rather a deeper feeling of change, a deeper aspect of change. These tamasic tendencies are not instincts, instincts of self-preservation, of fame, of procreation and so forth, which I mentioned briefly in my previous talk.

The rajasic qualities represent an aspect of will that is directed towards the material dimension. Now our will and our aspirations, which are being directed toward the material world for a selfish, self-centred vision have to be sublimated for a universal vision and to attain this universal vision where you are not important, where everyone is as important as you, you are not interested in an ego. Rather, you are able to provide security to each and every one who comes in contact with you. It is your external manifestation of a sattwic nature. Is this clear? That is your external manifestation of the sattwic

nature and this sattwic nature, generally for most of you, where your philosophy of life, your thoughts which function in life, and your actions which take you through life, merge.

Does goodness ultimately overcome bad?

Goodness . . . This question can be answered in many different ways. You see, good cannot exist in the absence of bad. What you recognize as good is recognized because there is something bad. What you recognize as positive is known because there is something negative.

Yoga is very clear that the externalization of mind and personality is detrimental to human health because it does not consider many of the samskaras and the karmas which are natural qualities, which are natural to life. You have heard of compassion, you have heard of affection, but have you ever expressed compassion and affection in your life, which is unconditional, which is not tainted or motivated by desire? No. Nobody has, and I can be sure about it, firm about it. Why? Because the externalization of our human nature makes the good become and remain as a concept, as an idea, while the interaction happens at a negative level, *nakaratmak*. Negative is not the correct word – the correct word is *nakaratmak*. Ultimately, when you awaken these qualities within yourself, then that goodness overshadows the limiting nature of negativity, therefore, in a simple statement, yes. Goodness does ultimately overcome the negative, the bad, but you cannot only look at it from a philosophical or a social viewpoint. You have to strive for goodness, and that is your contribution to human society.

1995

Delhi

Kolkata

Mumbai

Delhi

Bengaluru



Satsang on Spiritual Life

February 1995, Delhi

Is it possible that my suffering in this life is caused by bad karma from my previous life?

In *Tantra Loka*, a treatise of Kashmir Shaivism, twenty states of consciousness have been defined whereas we only talk of four so there is a vast area of our life and of our consciousness which is unknown to us. The totality of consciousness responds and reacts to the information and impressions which we know as archetypes, and that it receives from society and life itself. It is these impressions which become the karmas and samskaras carried from one life to the next.

Whether one believes in reincarnation, rebirth, or not, it doesn't matter. One has to believe in the theory of evolution. Evolution does not end with our present life; it continues even after death in a different form, in a different way. These impressions, which are gathered by one's consciousness, respond to different situations and circumstances in a different way.

You also have to understand the role of gunas, of the divine nature, and of *prakriti*, nature, in your life, in order to understand the theory of karma, tragedy and catastrophe. It is a long and tedious process about which I am also not clear. I am being very frank with you.

What is prayer? How should we pray to God?

Well, I am not happy with the style of prayer that we have today. In our style of prayer, instead of being the servant and the instrument of God, we try to become the master and the

ruler of God. We say, “God, please do this for me. I’ll be very happy.” That is not the right prayer. I think prayer should enable one to surrender to the will of God.

Adiguru Shankaracharya, who is the founder of our sannyasa tradition, wrote a sloka saying, “Oh God, forgive my sins. My first sin was, I searched you everywhere, forgetting that you are omnipresent. My second sin was to talk about you, forgetting that you are beyond words. My third sin was me telling you of problems, forgetting that you are omniscient.” So, this is another form of prayer, and this is the highest form of prayer.

You spoke about harmonizing the individual, society and nature. In the society of today, especially the urban concrete jungle of Delhi, how is it possible for an individual to achieve this for the peace of one’s soul?

There is one sentence of our Guruji which has always inspired me very much, “There is no peace in the Himalayas, and there is no noise in the world. Whatever is there is within you. If you are unable to find peace within yourself, you won’t find peace in the Himalayas, and if you are able to find peace within yourself, you won’t hear the noises in Chandi Chowk.”

Sometimes it becomes trying for people who live in one environment to accept, adapt and adjust their mind, their desire and their lifestyle to a different form of living. At that time, through the process of meditation we should try to realize our nature. After seeing our involvement and role in society and after understanding our obligation to the maintenance of nature, we can find a point of balance. Of course, we have to go through the process of meditation and attain this realization in meditation.

We need to see the relationship that can exist between an individual, nature and human society. I feel it is a matter of re-educating our mind, our belief and our thoughts, in order to come to a point of understanding and realization and in the meantime, meditation can definitely help.

Are there special instructions for elderly people regarding asana and pranayama? Particularly regarding rest between pranayama practices? What technique of meditation would you advise for them?

All the practices of yoga, whether they be asana or pranayama, should be performed with total comfort and ease of body and mind, not as a form of gymnastics. Asanas should be done in order to:

1. Realize the body, get to know the body;
2. Provide mobility and flexibility to the body;
3. Ensure that the life force, *prana*, flows through each and every part of the body properly.

These are the three basic rules of asana. If you find that while performing a certain asana or pranayama, you get stressed, then go into a state of relaxation and after you are rested, you can again begin the normal yoga practice. Even in the practices of pranayama you find that, due to the lack of control over the respiratory system, the lack of control of the flow of breath, you sometimes feel shortness of breath or become tired or mentally agitated. At that moment, it is advisable to stop the pranayama practice and just concentrate on deep breathing until you become relaxed; then again restart the pranayama practice.

As for the meditation technique, yoga has come up with a very good system. It starts with *pratyahara*, goes into *dharana* and then goes into meditation. So *pratyahara* is the most basic training in meditation that we can provide for ourselves. Meditation, according to yoga, is a state of mind. It is a state of being. It is not a practice. And how is that? You will know if you are aware of the sequence of *pratyahara* and of *dharana*.

Pratyahara

In *pratyahara*, an attempt is made to divert the activities of the physical senses, the *karmendriyas*, and the mental senses, the *jnanendriyas*, which are continuously flowing outwards, externally, and being attracted to the pleasures of the world. To direct them back within ourselves is known as *pratyahara*, focusing the flow of the senses within ourselves. In yoga, the

traditional description is, that just like a turtle withdraws all its limbs into its shell, a human being must be able to withdraw the senses from outside to inside. What are the limbs that a turtle withdraws? Two arms, two legs, one tail – and they represent the five senses, the *indriyas*, and the turtle’s head represents the mind. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (15:7), Sri Krishna mentioned this. It is in a different context but it is the appropriate description:

*Mamaivaamsho jeevaloke jeevabhootah sanaatanah;
Manahshashthaaneendriyaani prakritisthaani karshati.*

An eternal portion of Myself, having become a living soul in the world of life, draws to (itself) the (five) senses with the mind for the sixth, abiding in Nature.

The meaning of the verse, the sloka is: “My own part is attracted in the realm of prakriti, and it goes into prakriti with six things: mind, plus five senses – *manaha shashthaan indriyaani*”. The five senses and mind have to be contained and their activity has to be channelled, and this is the beginning of pratyahara.

Those of us who practise meditation come across a problem in that whenever we try to meditate, we find that the attention is wavering and wandering here and there. Instead of meditation, sometimes we are fighting, we are struggling with ourselves to concentrate, and that is a natural thing. It is the nature of the self to be dissipated, and the moment we become aware of ourselves, we find that our mind is going in different directions because it has had no training in becoming still, in being still. That is one form of education we have never received: we have never received an education by which we can still our mind. This education is provided in pratyahara.

Dharana

Observe the activity of the senses and withdraw them, centre them in the essence, in the core of your being. Observe the activities of the mind and then begin to centre it, focus it.

The moment you begin to focus the activities of the senses and the mind and they start coming together in one point, in one symbol, in one image, then the stage of dharana begins. *Dharana* means ‘to hold’, to hold the experience, to hold the experience which you are having within you. Initially, in dharana also, many times fluctuations happen, but eventually, after perfecting dharana, you move into meditation where the mind is absolutely steady and quiet, tranquil, without agitations, without any conflicts, and that is meditation.

I would suggest and recommend that everyone begin with the practice of pratyahara. There are many techniques of pratyahara: yoga nidra, for example, is a technique of pratyahara; ajapa japa is a technique of pratyahara; antar mouna, observation of thoughts and inner behaviour, is a technique of pratyahara. In order to intensify the effect of pratyahara techniques you can also practise trataka, a technique of dharana, holding and fixing the attention at one point, but begin with the techniques of pratyahara

How should people getting on in age, whether a couple or single, cope with life when the future appears so uncertain and difficult, physically and mentally, and hence the sense of insecurity looms large?

Please don’t mind my saying it, but I feel this problem can be managed if, at an advanced age, you gradually reduce your identification with the world, with society and with the family, and increase your identification with yourself and your God. You see, this has to be a progressive development in life, and you have to accept it, because if you don’t, there will be insecurities and problems, and there will be conflicts, loneliness and isolation.

You have to find a way to link your emotions and your feelings to something other than the world, society and your family, and you have to discover your relationship with God. I am not trying to sound *dharmic*, religious, but I don’t see any other solution. It is a fact of life. Also, I would suggest that you begin with some form of satsang, some form of sadhana, whether it is japa, dhyana, or some form of study:

reading scriptures, holy books or literatures which give you a realization of your own being. This definitely goes a long way in helping you with such problems; I am sure of it. One can discuss many other things, but in my opinion, this is the best way.

You have used the word self-discovery. I find in most people their self is dormant or mind is undiscovered. How do we go about self-discovery?

Self-discovery begins with self-observation, which changes into self-awareness, which changes into self-discovery, which later on changes into self-realization. Observation, awareness, discovery and realization – these are the stages described in yoga.

How do we go about observation? There is an innate potential of mind, which in Sanskrit is known as *chitta*, and this potential or this aspect of mind is continuously observing, witnessing, seeing and absorbing, retaining information that it receives through the senses. Now, if we are able to observe the impressions that have been received by the senses and by the mind in our life and analyze them, then awareness grows in the course of time.

I will give you one example. At night, when we go to sleep, let us not just think about the problems that we have faced, things that we need to do tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, or our aims and ambitions. Let us, for ten minutes only, observe the events of the day from morning, the time when we got up, until the time we actually went to bed. I have experimented with this system and it has helped me tremendously. Remember: 'I woke up at such-and-such time, my first movement was . . . the first thing that I saw was . . . the first thing that I heard was . . . Try to remember it. Then how you got out of your bed, and went about your daily routine.

When I practise, I see everything happening in the eyes of my mind like a movie, as if the entire proceeding of the day has been recorded. I had my breakfast, this is what I ate, this was the taste, then I spoke to this person, I communicated with that person, I was dressed like this, I changed my clothes,

I read the newspaper, I looked at some papers, I looked at some files, then I spoke to this or that person. Then I went to the office, and not only 'went to the office', but I got in the car and this was the route that I took and these were the things that I saw. I mean, every moment has to be re-lived.

After a week, you will see a great difference in your perceptions and insight. If you find that there are times when you come under stress or become stressful, and you react to situations or circumstances or people, even those reactions will be controlled eventually.

I am not talking of minute to minute self-observation of what is happening now – like I am moving my arms, I am looking at you, the lights are on, people are outside, there are different sounds everywhere. No. That would be too much dissipation of awareness, and maybe we could do it for a few minutes, but not for long. I am only asking that you practise for ten minutes, remembering, observing things that have happened to you from the time you woke up until the time you got into bed to sleep.

This will develop an unconscious awareness of your activities, your interactions, your behaviour, your thoughts, your expressions, and in the course of time, you will find yourself holding back and not reacting instinctively, negatively, to situations, people or events as you would have previously. Instead, an inner awareness, a warning goes on, 'Hey, you are committing the same mistakes that you made in the past – hold it'. Use your better judgment, and you will find that your total life-pattern changes. It all begins to happen at an unconscious level, then later on it begins to manifest. This awareness will develop and develop and develop until it becomes a process of self-discovery: this is my nature, my prakriti, this is my action and the area of my activity, this is how I approach people, this is how I receive information, and so forth.

You will come to know the subtle aspects of yourself and as you come to know them, you will realize your own nature. You will improve those expressions of your nature, and improving the expressions of the nature is known as self-discovery.

Our environment is undergoing a rapid change from the traditional or customary outlook to the so-called modern outlook. This is leaving many of us confused as to which way to follow. What is your message in brief to the whole community in the present circumstances?

Well, I don't have any message in brief for the community because I feel it is a question of us using our *viveka*, ability of discrimination, and it is due to the lack of *viveka* that we are not able to combine the best of both. We have to be able to combine the best of both. The traditional and customary definitely holds a great meaning, purpose and has its *raison d'être*. The modern view also has a meaning, a purpose and an aim. If we can combine the best of both, using our *viveka*, the faculties of discrimination, then I am sure we shall not be confused. After all, I am also enjoying the best of both worlds in my life as a sannyasin. As a sannyasin, I enjoy my traditional customary wisdom, knowledge, studies and know-how, and as a life member of this planet, I enjoy the modern outlook also.

I would love to come to Munger to learn yoga. When will you be there to teach?

That is a very difficult question to answer because now I have become free from Munger. My term in Munger was of 11 years.

Sri Swami Satyananda, our guruji, had a 20-year life cycle. He was born in 1923 and he joined Sri Swami Sivananda in 1943. He established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, then he left Bihar School of Yoga in 1983. Now he has entered into a different lifestyle.

In the same way, my life cycle is divided in 11-year cycles. At the age of 11, I left India to travel abroad. At the age of 22, I returned to India and took charge of Bihar School of Yoga and the yoga movement. At the age of 33, I renounced Bihar School of Yoga. Let us see what happens at the age of 44. By saying, "I have renounced Bihar School of Yoga", I mean I have renounced the administrative side of it, not the yogic side. The administrative side was a bit too much to handle along with the yogic side.

Starting last year, I have taken up an 11-year project. Our aim was to carry the message of yoga to every village in India. We have started this work and we have had very good results. You have to remember that Bihar has been number one in everything. It gave the world Buddhism. It gave the world Jainism. It gave India the first president, Dr Rajendra Prasad. If people will remember Bihar in the future, it will be because yoga is being given to the world from Bihar.

Bihar is number one in many ways because it has given us many opportunities to experiment with yoga at many levels, and I have to oversee such activities. For example, the government requested us to teach yoga in all the central and state prisons in Bihar, and out of 19 prisons in Bihar, we have taught in nine up until now. The criminals are finding a lot of benefit from the practices of yoga. Their mental agitations and their mentality have changed.

At the request of the Bihar government, we have also started teaching yoga in all the medical colleges. Until now we have covered four medical colleges. We have a good friend in the Health Department who initiated this program and it has been going very well. In Patna Medical College, in Darbhanga Medical College, in Dhanbad and in Bhagalpur, regular activities are going on. Not only that, however, as a resolution has been taken by the government that all the practising medical doctors within the state must undergo yoga therapy training in each of the different areas whether rural areas, town areas or cities. All doctors must undergo the yoga therapy training program, and eventually teach yoga to their patients.

Alongside this, we have started village programs where, as an experiment, we have been going to villages which are considered to be in the most crime-infested areas, and we are looking after their spiritual as well as social needs. It is an undisclosed fact that over 350 criminals have surrendered their weapons, and have taken the sankalpa to go in the right direction from now on.

Apart from this, beginning in September we are starting the Bihar Yoga Bharati, which is an institute devoted to higher

studies in yoga. We are trying for the 'deemed university' status for Bihar Yoga Bharati, so that eventually degrees can also be awarded. The teaching and training at Bihar Yoga Bharati is going to begin this September. We will be conducting four-month Certificate Course in Yogic Sciences, which will give the basic understanding of yoga and one-year Diploma Course in Yogic Sciences, with specialization in therapy, general teaching and training, and its many applications. Eventually, we will have two-year degree courses, which will be conducted in Yoga Philosophy, Yoga Psychology and Applied Yoga Science.

I also have to travel a lot throughout India conducting conventions and seminars, and I travel outside India. In January, I was calculating the days which I have physically spent in Munger, and it totalled four months out of twelve. You can imagine the extent of running around for yoga that we have to do because we are trying to give a new dimension to Bihar School of Yoga activities as the academic side will be conducted by Bihar Yoga Bharati.

We are formulating in-depth sadhana programs. It will be a sadhana-oriented and therapy-oriented organization where health management courses for specific problems will be run with proper research being conducted by the ashram. At the same time, it will become a centre for people who want to experience the ashram lifestyle, being in nature, leading a tension-free life.

Bihar School of Yoga is where we can impart good sannyasa training, for that is also necessary. It is a must. If we have to contribute anything to human society, then we need to train ourselves. We can't just wear the guru robes and say anything that comes into our head. Sannyasa is a vocation, in a similar way to being doctors, engineers or professors, and we have to develop it in that way.

These will be the areas of Bihar School of Yoga in the future and at the same time, we are very much involved in social work, which is gaining momentum day-by-day. In the months of December and January this year, we visited 33 villages, reached 10,000 families and provided them with

what they needed: warm clothes for each member of the family, cows, rickshaws, bicycles, thelas, sewing machines, we provided classes and vocational training and then employment opportunities. That was also a massive job which we had done in two months. Visiting 10,000 families and making sure that they are living a decent life is not a joke – it's a big task.

One has to realize one thing: What can a sannyasin contribute to human society? The quality of sannyasins in India, and I am very frank about it, is not a balanced quality. There are a great number of sannyasins in India – in our own tradition of Shankaracharya there are fifty lakh, 5 million, and if you include the Vaishnava traditions and the other sects, *sampradayas*, there are an incredible number of sadhus, swamis and renunciates. What are we contributing to the growth of human society? How can we be more effective? I have realized one thing. Maybe my understanding is not right. Maybe it will change, but I do feel that, as a sannyasin, although my aim in life is self-realization, it is not my karma. Aim and karma are two different things.

I have decided that we have to extend a helping hand. Let me extend a helping hand. Let us extend a helping hand.

Satsang at the Rotary Club

25 March 1995, Rotary Club, Kolkata

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be present with all of you, discussing a few points about yoga. Before I do that, however, let me clarify something. I'm here in the capacity of a sannyasin and my profession is teaching yoga. The combination of these two does not make yoga a religion. The reason why I'm saying this is that while I'm speaking to you, I don't want you to look at me like I am a religious figure. I want you to look at me from the perspective of a yoga teacher, who is involved in research work and the propagation of yoga. If we are able to understand what is happening in the field of yoga, then automatically many of the misconceptions we have developed from the early days will dissolve.

To give you a broad picture of how yoga is being utilized in the development and growth of human society and personality, I would like to give you some examples of work that is being done and research that has been conducted in India and in different parts of the world.

Let me begin with 1976. That was the year yoga met science and science met yoga, and they both fell in love. In 1976, the first experiments were done in the therapy aspect of yoga. In Australia, work was done on the management of cancer. In Orissa-Birla Medical College, work was done on the management of diabetes. Dr Date worked on the management of hypertension in Bombay. In Patna, Doctor Srinivasan worked on the management of cardiovascular systems. In Europe, America, and many other places, work

was being done on the management of different psychological illnesses and problems. All this physical research showed that yoga has the possibility of providing total health to a human being who is suffering from a disease or illness.

As an extension of this work on the therapeutic aspect of yoga, Dr Dean Ornish from the US has experimented with people needing bypass surgery due to blocked arteries. Without the help of any medication, blockages have disappeared from the arteries, and the need for surgery was avoided.

The research has shown without any doubt, that human beings have the potential to obtain total health if they are simply aware of what is wrong in their life, body and mind. This is a very important point before we go onto other subjects. We have to be aware, know what is going on and where the imbalance is happening in our lifestyle, habits, work situations, environment, family, society and our world. You do not have to look around you, or see what's wrong in another person's life. You have to look at yourself.

The root cause of the majority of problems in the world today, apart from bacterial and viral attacks on the body and factors of pollution, the root cause of the majority of problems in human life is tension. Tension is definitely not a bad thing. The ancient traditions of the world have emphasized the proper use of tension in our life by giving different metaphors and examples. Even in the Upanishads it has been stated very clearly in the form of a metaphor, "If the mind is like a bow, then awareness is like the string. In order to provide force, propulsion, and dynamism to our actions and thoughts, it is this bow of mind and the string of awareness which have to be pulled. At the time of pulling, there is bound to be tension". This is only one small example of how the ancient traditions have supported tension; they have not spoken against it. We are not speaking against tension either. We are saying that tension has to be managed so that the negativity and repercussions of unmanaged tension does not inhibit the creative expression of our mind, personality and behaviour. The moment tension takes root in our personality and our life

due to whatever reason, whether social, family or financial, diseases are bound to come up.

If you look at the word ‘disease’, you will find that it is a combination of two words: ‘dis’ + ‘ease’. Ease is the normal or comfortable state of the body in which the body is relaxed, the mind is relaxed. The creative powers and creative nature of the human personality are balanced. When, due to some reason, a disturbance is created in the normal ease of the body, that disturbance takes the form of a disease. Whether it is asthma or diabetes, gastrointestinal problems, cancer or AIDS, you will find that there is a definite area of disturbance, an imbalance in our lifestyle, the way we live, eat, work, or sleep. Or there is a disturbance in our mental structure, which does not allow proper mental relaxation to take place.

One thing you should remember is that we have been taking our body for granted, that this is ours to use and misuse as we like. Fine. You are free to misuse it. You are free to use it according to your wishes; however, just as there are certain rules for a car, in the same way, there are certain rules that apply to the body as well. If you do not take your car in for servicing on time, what will be the result? If you never take your car in for servicing, what will be the result? I don’t have to go into the gory details.

Imagine how many times you have taken your body in for servicing. Just think about it. After every 5,000 kilometres the car has to go to the garage, and you get three free services. After that you have to pay. How many free services have you missed in your life? And how many paid services have you provided to yourself? None so far. Even when you go to a doctor, they don’t service your body, they simply repair the part that is damaged. If you need a kidney, they will provide you with a kidney. If you need a heart, they will provide you with a bypass or a pacemaker. You see, this technological development, which is definitely a great boon to humankind, is being misused. We have a rather limited area of technological advancement that can benefit our life in general. You can be sure that I’m not going to change my view on this subject. We have made mistakes, and we have to

recognize them. We have all made mistakes in our lives. We are suffering because of those mistakes.

This is where yoga comes in and says first become aware of the imbalances that you find in your body. In order to become aware of the imbalances, diseases, illnesses or disturbances, you need to objectively look at yourself. How is your lifestyle? It has to be a very personal view. It is not a social view that you adopt of your life, it is a very personal view. We are not commenting on social views; we are concerned with your personal views.

Yoga has also made a statement that it is the body which becomes sick due to the mismanagement of the body by the individual. The body has the potential to rectify any deficiency, disease or imbalance, whether it be physical or psychological, if you simply learn how to manage yourself. That is the reason why we succeeded in the treatment of cancer. That is why we are succeeding in the treatment of AIDS.

It is with pride that I can tell you that last year, when I was travelling in Europe, I had a meeting with a group of AIDS patients and their doctors and therapists in London. They had been practising yoga according to our system for some time. Out of this experiment, in which ten confirmed HIV positive people participated, after nine months, one person showed a total reversal, a total cure, and the others were showing improvement. Last year we were able to make a claim that after nine months of yoga practice, one person was totally cured of AIDS. This year we are making a claim that ten people have been helped. It is only a matter of taking this project to the public, where thousands who are suffering from AIDS can benefit.

This is just an example of how the body has the ability, the potential and the power to heal itself. You don't have to run for medical treatments; they are necessary no doubt. We are not against medicine, nor are we against doctors; however, if we are truthful with ourselves we will find that every kind of therapy system in the world today, only provides symptomatic relief. You have a headache, you take an aspirin, and you are

able to get rid of that headache in ten minutes. Does it mean the cause of your headache has gone?

When I was living in the United States in the 1980s, I had a fridge. In that fridge there was a red light. Whenever that red light came on, it meant something was wrong with the fridge. You know what I did? I removed the red light. That is what we have all been doing. Whenever something goes wrong there is an indication, a light. A bulb flashes, but we simply disconnect that bulb. We are never aware of what is wrong until it reaches a critical point. This is why it becomes very difficult to manage health, and provide health to a sick person. Even the modern therapies, whatever they may be, no matter how advanced they may be, have not yet been able to pinpoint the cause of a disease. They are only symptomatic treatments. If it is asthma, you take bronchodilators. You don't deal with the cause of asthma. If it is diabetes, you take injections or tablets rather than deal with the cause. If it is insomnia, you take tranquilizers or sleeping tablets; you don't deal with the cause of sleeplessness. Everything that we do in life follows a similar pattern. The therapeutic aspect of yoga has proved itself to be a very efficient and effective aspect. Science has accepted it in this light also.

The second aspect of yoga is in mind management. This is where we differ from other people who say through yoga, one can control the mind. We say no. Through yoga you cannot control the mind. You learn how to manage your mind in a different, better, positive and creative way. The moment you are able to manage your mind things change naturally, automatically and spontaneously.

What work has been done in this field? In Europe we established an organization which was known as RYE, Research on Yoga in Education. The work of this organization is to teach and train teachers who are training students in schools, colleges and universities. Those teachers in turn, teach the simple and the basic principles of yoga, I'm not saying practices of yoga, to the students. As a result of the yogic introduction in a classroom environment, we have seen students' memories improve tremendously. We have seen

their habits change drastically. Their addictions to drugs have reduced drastically. Their negative and destructive actions in society are changing drastically.

I'm not saying that yoga has the answers to all the questions that you may have in life. I'm only stating that in different areas where we have been able to incorporate yoga into a lifestyle, positive changes have been seen. It is up to you to experiment with it. This happened in a classroom environment, and also in a prison environment, in Australia and in America.

The criminal mentality, the emotional disturbance of that mentality, the rational power of that mentality is affected after committing a crime, especially if they have to pass a life sentence in a very destructive and negative environment. Jails and prisons don't provide a positive environment for change. They are a very negative and destructive environment, and we expect people to change by living in such an environment. It's not possible. Therefore, the application of yoga practices in the life of a prisoner has also been very vital in providing them with a different view and approach to their behaviour, to their thinking and to their expression.

I am also proud to announce that this coming month we have been given the task by the government of Bihar to provide yoga training in all the prisons in the state of Bihar. There are twenty-four prisons and it will be an ongoing project. This is a big step by anyone, whether it is the government of Bihar, or the government of India. Whoever it may be, it is a very big step by anyone. It is recognition that yoga can help those suffering due to their criminal mentality, that yoga can change their outlook in life and their behaviour. We are looking forward to this program with optimism.

There are other areas of mind management also. In Australia yoga has been used in psychiatric practices, for people who have been suffering from emotional disturbances, for people who have been suffering from the syndromes of war, such as the Vietnam War. The Vietnam veterans are going through hell. There are swami psychiatrists who are helping such people come to terms with their mind, with their nature and with whatever is happening to them.

Whether it is for improvement of memory, management of deep psychological problems or changes in behaviour and personality, yoga is being used quite effectively by everyone concerned in their respective fields. These are some of the possibilities that yoga can provide to a person to improve themselves and their life. Looking at all these different aspects of yoga, and comparing them with our ancient tradition, we can say that yoga is an integrated system that can provide us with the means to fulfil the four purusharthas in life: *artha*, wealth; *karma*, love; *dharma*, duty and *moksha*, liberation.

The trend of modern society is *artha* and *kama*: financial security and fulfilment of ambitions and desires in life. This is the current trend of the present day society. This is fine. Even for the business person, yoga is very much needed. We used to run courses, 'Business Management through Yoga'. There is a person in Australia who is doing a complete thesis on the applications of yoga for the improvement of business. Similar to the way we are now following Japanese, American and British methods to improve our administrative skills and business abilities, people are now researching the yogic and vedic principles of business management. Yoga is without a doubt, an aid to make us more aware of the possibilities that exist for the attainment of *artha* and *kama*.

At the same time, yoga provides an awareness of *dharma* and *moksha*. *Dharma* is not religion, but rather in the form of *kartavya*. *Kartavya*, or *dharma* is a combination of two things: dedication to the fulfilment of an obligation and with that, maintaining the sensitivity of emotion. That is the actual *dharma*, not Shaivism, not Vaishnavism, not Jainism, not Buddhism. They are not *dharma*s in the yogic context. If you see this approach to life and try to implement it also, you will become a better human being. You don't become an orthodox, religious being. You become a better human being.

The last is *purushartha* is *moksha*, and this is just freedom of expression in life. The moment you are able to express yourself with absolute freedom, your mind becomes creative. Your nature becomes creative. Your behaviour becomes creative. Your thinking becomes creative and constructive to

everyone around you. That is known as moksha. Moksha is not God-realization. Moksha is experiencing the freedom of self, the freedom of personality.

These are the four aspects of human life which yoga tries to reach and make full. It is in this context that we have to understand yoga, as a means to provide us with a better understanding on how to manage life. It is my only request to you that if you get an opportunity to learn yoga, don't miss it. Hari Om Tat Sat

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Swamiji, you said that yoga has a cure for diabetes, blood pressure and other diseases. Once you start that process, how long does it take?

That's a very good question. Improvement can be seen within ten days' time. The maximum time that we have experienced is in the treatment of diabetes. In Calcutta, we used to have a centre on Theatre Road and later, Tollygunge. It is now closed, however, it was here that we conducted our first diabetic camp. I was nearly put in jail once because of that. I had to carry blood samples from Calcutta to the Burla Medical College in Sambalpur, and there we were testing it. The thermos broke and blood went everywhere. Consequently, they thought I had murdered somebody. It was a mess.

There are between 300–400 people in Calcutta who have been totally cured of diabetes in a span of 40 days. After that, we used to give them vidai by having them eat all the prohibited mishti dohi, sandesh, rasagolla, rice – everything.

Swamiji, why can't we make this more popular because diabetes has become a real menace. In allopathy, you have no cure for that; you can control it, but you have no cure. If yoga can cure it in 40 days, then I think it is a miracle.

Such courses are being conducted regularly by our ashrams. You also have to remember that yoga is a growing science. Twenty years ago, nobody knew the word yoga. Today, there is an acceptance of yoga. Twenty years in the future, yoga will

follow a definite line of therapy so there are possibilities, and we are working in that direction.

We have recently established the first yoga university in the world, which will begin to function in September this year. It has the honour of being the first yoga university in the world. It will focus on six main subjects. Just to give you an idea of what we will be doing, there will be one department of yoga philosophy, another department of yoga psychology and another department of applied yoga, which will research the practices of yoga. Therapy investigations will be conducted and taught to practising professionals. Those with a BSc in Medicine will qualify to take the MSc in Applied Yoga. In the course of time, that will provide enough background and training to the new, upcoming professionals who will then be able to use such training in their normal practise. Give us a few more years' and if you need immediate help, we can make ourselves available.

To learn yoga, there should be a centre or some trained people who can train you. However, there is no centre; how can people learn yoga practices? Are there any books that one can read to learn these practices?

Unquestionably, a teacher is required to learn yoga, because nowadays, and I'm being very open and frank with you, there are many yoga quacks in the same way as there are many medical quacks. There are many yoga quacks who think of yoga as a business opportunity, and they often do more damage than good.

There are very few good yoga training institutes, whether it be in India or any other place in the world, who are following a systematic, scientific approach. In the Eastern region of India, it is the Bihar School of Yoga. In the Western region it is Santacruz Yoga Centre in Bombay, and Kaivalyadham in Lonavala. In the Southern region it is Vivekananda Kendra in Bangalore. In the Northern region it is Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh. These are five government-recognized yoga institutes in the country. Apart from these five, you'll find 50,000 other institutes where one can say that training and

teaching is provided. These centres have published good books on yoga, however, books can only provide you with a guideline. If you have the basic understanding, you can practise it. We never recommend that you follow a yoga practice with a book, but they can be your initial teacher.

Kothari Medical Conference

25 to 27 March 1995, Kothari Medical Centre, Kolkata

I would like to begin with a brief description of the holistic ancient therapy and its relationship with yoga. Then we can see how yoga applies in life and the world today to manage the different problems that humankind is facing now, which medical science and everyone in their own capacity, are making an effort to solve.

In the art of healing it goes without saying that modern technology has made great advancement, and in this process of advancement and therapy, yoga is also playing at present a small, yet vital role.

Yoga has never discriminated between the physical sciences and the spiritual sciences. That is point number one. This is a very important point that we should try to understand and recognize its validity. The moment we dissect an individual into mechanical functions related to the body and unknown mental, psychological functions related with the mind, we are not taking in a whole picture of a human being.

Let me give you an example. In our tradition, we hear that rishis and munis were the propagators of science in ancient India. Now, those rishis and munis were not of the same calibre as sannnyasins who exist today; our calibre has gone down very much. Those rishis and munis were actually scientists, professionals and doctors. In those days 'rishi' was the name given to people who had devoted their effort in life to attaining something positive and beneficial for the whole of humanity. They were not the rejects of society,

rather society used to revolve around them. They were not renunciates according to the concept of renunciation we have today, rather they provided a strong basis or foundation for the realization of the faculties inherent in the personality of every human being.

There were the first thinkers and healers, and their contribution to the different healing sciences are well recognized all over the world, for example Rishi Gheranda who wrote the *Gheranda Samhita*, and many such people come to light. These people looked upon an individual as a whole, including the body, the emotions, the feelings and thoughts. They were not only confining themselves to maintaining and preserving the physical or the mental structure, but also of the spiritual needs and spiritual structure, and that was considered to be the complete form of therapy.

In the course of time, some differences came about and people started to specialize. Those people who began to specialize in the art of treating the physical imbalances, deficiencies and illnesses followed a certain line of which medical doctors are the products. Some people followed a mental line, and psychologists, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists are the products. In this way, the treatment of the whole unit of an individual diversified into treating functions of the body, diseases of the body, and management of that aspect; treating functions, diseases and management of the mind, and treating functions, diseases and management of the spiritual aspect of life.

That is why, despite our technological advancements today, we have not been able to provide a complete therapy to anyone. Rather, in our profession as healers and therapists, whether you as a doctor or me as a sannyasin, we are only doing patchwork; we are not healing or treating the whole person. Today people think the concept of health spanning the physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of a person is a concept of the World Health Organization, WHO. It might be, in the present context, but this concept is the original one which guided the healers and therapist in past ages too. The WHO is only confirming the vision, ideal

and goal which the rishis, munis and yogis always cherished and maintained: that the concept of real health is harmonious integration of the faculties of body, mind, feelings, emotions, lifestyle, environment and spirituality.

We are always being influenced by different factors. Sometimes an attack on one's personal self-image might be sufficient to increase the blood pressure. We might give such a person medicine and treatment to manage the hypertension, but are we able to treat the damage that is done to his feelings and mind? No, we are simply reducing the external symptom to a manageable state. We are not treating him. Sometimes I wonder whether, due to so many restrictions, we are given the freedom to heal others or not. We simply follow a stereotyped system, 'You have this symptom, so try this medicine or this injection'.

I am sure you are more aware of this than I am, but the thought definitely comes to my mind, 'Are we free to help others, to treat others, or do words and actions differ from each other? Do our desires and aspirations and what we actually do for a patient differ from each other?' I am sure you can give me a better answer to this question because it is not a simple thing; it is a very complex thing. However, in recent times we have increasingly seen that yoga is an accepted form of managing the illnesses and diseases of the body, mind, emotions and spirit.

The broad picture

In order to create the environment for our discussions, I would like to give you a resume of different work that has been conducted in different parts of the world in relation to yoga therapy. The work actually started in the year 1971 when, at the Indira Gandhi Cardiology Centre in Patna, Dr Srinivasan became the first Indian to experiment with the techniques of yoga on those with coronary heart problems. From that moment onwards, people who were aware of today's needs and who wanted to contribute more substantially for the treatment of human society, started to look at the various angles and approaches of yoga therapy.

Dr N.C. Panda, who is now Director of Health Services in Orissa, undertook a specific project of conducting research on diabetes. It was conducted in Calcutta, Sambalpur, Cuttak, Bolangir and at the Burla Medical College, and there was a very high success rate in the management of non-insulin dependent diabetes, with an improvement rate of about 90%. They also found that in the course of 40 days of yoga practice, the people who were suffering from diabetes were able to get some relief and that with regular practise the symptoms did not reappear, rather the production of insulin in the body again started to happen. Of course, I am not a medical doctor and I will not be able to give you the medical reasons why the production of insulin started again; however, I am sure Dr Panda, who has looked into this aspect very closely, will be able to provide you with a satisfactory answer.

Similarly, Dr K.K. Datey in K.E.M. Hospital, Bombay, conducted an investigation into the management of hypertension using the practices of relaxation, more specifically, the technique of shavasana. His reports were published in many of the leading journals within the country as well as outside the country. These were the initial investigations which directed the attention of the medical community to the science of yoga, introducing what yoga could offer to people in order to manage the various symptoms that inhibit the flow of creativity in life.

Continuing from this, in 1977 Dr Ainslie Meares from the Australian Cancer Research Society used basic yoga practices in the management of cancer. He investigated the inclusion of yoga practices for six patients, to whom modern medicine had said, "There is no possible cure; please make your last will and testament because now it only depends on God as to when he takes you away from this earth." This happened in 1977 and after about a year of the practice of yoga in which they were only taught relaxation, mantra and some breathing practices, they were able to help themselves regain health. The situation today is that Dr Ainslie Meares died some time ago; however, those patients are still alive, hearty and kicking.

In 1989, our own Yoga Research Foundation had undertaken a five-year international research project on the management of respiratory disorders using the practices of yoga. In this project, people suffering from bronchial asthma were focused on and their lifestyles, dietary habits and the environmental pollution of their surroundings, everything was observed and monitored in relation to the effects on human health.

First this research was conducted in various states of India, then it was conducted in Australia, Italy, Greece and England. Our aim was to include 10,000 patients from an international group with diverse lifestyles, food habits and environment, to see how yoga could help such a vast range of people in the management of respiratory problems. We are now in the process of compiling the reports that have come and once it is done, those reports will be sent out to specialists in the field throughout the world for their critical comments. Once those comments are received, then we shall be presenting it to you.

More recently, in the management of AIDS, a small project is being conducted in London. We took this project up in 1993 and with nine months of practise a person initially confirmed HIV positive, now showed HIV negative. Last year I happened to be in England and met with the AIDS patients who are practising yoga. I spoke to them and found a lot of optimism in their life, a lot of hope, expectation and improvement. Consequently, we are now hoping to conduct more research, continuing this project of investigation in a controlled environment to see what actually can be done. Let us hope that in the course of time we are successful so that people who are suffering from such diseases can be helped.

Learn to be happy

Despite everything, yoga has a very simple formula. It says due to our ignorance and mismanagement of the environment and situations, and our misuse of body and mind, we create a disturbance in the normal ease of body and mind. When the normal ease of the body and mind are disturbed then that is known as dis-ease, disease.

There are certainly many factors why we become sick, but the biggest factor is one's own self: the inability to manage, to cope with different situations, circumstances, diet, atmospheric conditions and our lifestyle today. You must be well aware of the data that was presented by the WHO about India in relation to heart disease. The earliest survey for heart disease in India was conducted in 1905 by a group of doctors, and they found that only 5% of the people were suffering from so-called coronary problems. The same survey was conducted around 1925 and they found the percentage had increased to 15%. They found an increasing trend of people liable to suffer from coronary and cardiovascular problems as the lifestyle changed, as the social pressure increased, as the ambition in every person increased. Today we are well aware of the fact that cardiovascular problems are out of control. What has this proved? There has been a shift, a change that has affected our body, that has affected our minds, that has affected our emotions.

We know all this has happened, yet we have not been able to change the method of treatment for managing such changes that are affecting our body, mind, emotions, desires, feelings and spirit. Therefore, we find that many new kinds of illnesses and diseases are coming up gradually in the course of time. What can be the role of yoga? Yoga plays a small but vital role by providing some form of harmony in the functions of the physical systems and the mental structure so that the experience of mind does not negatively alter the physical condition.

Mental stress can cause a change in the physiological condition, in the physiological system and the ability to cope with that change. I will give you an example. A few years ago I had the opportunity to go to Haldia to conduct a stress management program for the executives of the Indian Oil Company. At that time there was an examination taking place for the post of an administrator and about fifty bright students from all over India were participating. They were all in their late twenty's. When they came to know that I was giving a course, they started to come to me one by one and

said, “Swamiji I have a burning sensation in my stomach. I saw a doctor and he said I am getting an ulcer”. I couldn’t understand it at first. One person came, two came, then practically 85% of the competing students came with the same problem of a burning sensation in the stomach. I started thinking, ‘What is happening? My age is the same as these people, but I do not have a burning sensation in the stomach’

Discussing it with various people, it dawned on me later that the competition and the aggression they were putting into it in order to excel, was affecting their whole digestive system. I told them to practise a simple yoga technique and by doing that they were able to help themselves. After about one month of practising yoga nidra, the problem of ulcer disappeared. When we see these things happening we have to accept, not only believe but accept, that there is a very vital link between mind and body which cannot be ignored in the management and treatment of a disease. There might be a physical problem and at the same time there is a corresponding mental problem, and both have to be managed. This was the discovery of the professionals who adopted yoga.

Many doctors in India and overseas began to take training in yoga so that they could write in their prescriptions, along with the medicines and injections, the corresponding yoga practices that could help the patients with their problem. The realization had come that we, as doctors, as healers should give the patients the option, either they do this or take this.

This is the realization we need to develop in our life today and I am grateful to the government of Bihar for providing us with an opportunity to teach yoga therapy in all the medical colleges in the state of Bihar, where the young students, the future doctors are trained in the therapeutic aspects of yoga. It means that later on they can use their own discriminative judgement on where to apply the power of medicine and where to apply the power of yoga. This project only started last year, and the swamis who are here have been fulfilling those requirements by conducting courses, classes and seminars. If it is successful, we hope that in the future our therapy system will undergo a change.

I don't know if you are aware of the historical significance of the word 'therapy', nevertheless, at the time when Alexander the Great was fighting the war at the borders of India, he came across one sadhu who, after the days' battle, would go around treating the injured soldiers of his country and also the enemies. Alexander called him and asked, "What are you doing?"

The sadhu said, "I am treating the soldiers."

"But we are your enemy; why do you treat us?"

"No problem. You might be the enemy, but you are still human beings."

"What is your name?"

"Theraban."

His name was Theraban. He went with Alexander on his travels. This Theraban established himself someplace in the Babylonian region and according to the local language, became known as Therapys, and in Greek as Therapeus. The science that he was propagating became known as 'therapy'.

We can aspire to get the best of both worlds by following the advancements in the medical and technological systems while at the same time, we have to aspire to stand on our own two feet to become proper therapists and healers, and I am sure that all of us have the capacity and can do it if we apply our mind to it.

We can try to be more understanding and open about the traditions and techniques that have existed and that are with us today, objectively see how they can help us overcome the problems of life which we are facing and attract the two things most desired in life: health, relating to the body and happiness, relating to the mind. If you are healthy and happy it means your mind and body are functioning optimally. 'Healthy' and 'happy' are not philosophical concepts; they represent the harmony and integration of body and mind. According to the yogic view, facilitating these two is the approach adopted by every individual in order to help others. Let us hope that by this method of interaction we can take a sankalpa to work for the betterment of humanity to the best of our ability.

Ladies Study Group

27 March 1995, Bengal Club, Kolkata

It is an honour for me to be present here with all of you today and to share some thoughts about the subject of yoga. Yoga, as you know, is a very ancient science which is being propagated in a very modern world and because of this, there are many misconceptions about the word 'yoga'.

We all have our own understanding, our own ideas, our own theories as to what yoga is and what role it plays in our life; however, I prefer that we do not understand yoga in its traditional way, rather let us look at the various components of our life and how yoga can help us harmonize and balance those components which create some kind of restriction in the expression of human creativity. It is very easy to say that yoga is only asana, pranayama, meditation, relaxation, and so on. Initially, people are very much attracted to yoga without knowing what it aspires for, so it becomes difficult to maintain continuity. That is why we find that after an initial experience of yoga, because of the lack of our own understanding, we are not able to follow it through.

In order to appreciate the spectrum of yoga, its beauty and the purpose of yoga, it is necessary that we become aware of all the different components that govern and influence our life. In this context let us start by looking at the social and the family environment and how it affects the human personality and the human nature. Whatever form of lifestyle we may lead, whether it be that of an affluent person or a beggar, in both lifestyles and in all other lifestyles we find that we are

subject to stress and tension. Now this stress and tension is one experience of an imbalance in handling that situation properly, thus increasing the level of stress and tension. This is one point.

Second point, lifestyle and habits. Despite our understanding of human life, we are unable to change our habits and these habits reflect in our diet, in our daily routine and in our acceptance of different life situations, whether they be external or internal in the form of mental and emotional experiences. When we are unable to compromise, when we are unable to come to terms with the lifestyle and the habits then diseases are created and this is the modern concept of disease also.

Why do we suffer from different physical, mental and emotional problems? The basis of physical problems in the form of gastric problems, diabetes, asthma, back pain, headache and so forth; of mental problems such as anxiety, irritability, anger, frustration and depression; and of emotional problems; is non-adjustment in life and not finding life to be fulfilling and enriching. The different problems, diseases and illnesses which we suffer from, have no treatment.

Modern medicine can provide symptomatic relief, but it is not able to go to the root cause of the problem or the disease. Some people may say that external stress or the factors which create stress are the cause of diseases and illnesses. They may be, yet apart from the stress factor there is also the habit the routine factor. The habit and routine factors are linked with the receptors of stress in our life. They are linked with tension in our life. The combination of so many things creates illness, disease, anxiety, frustration, dissatisfaction. The aim of modern therapies is to provide some form of relief so that we can change our habits, change our lifestyle, become more aware of ourselves. For example, if I am having a problem with diabetes then the modern therapist will tell me that I have to restrict many of my habits too, not only the stress factor, but also the habits have to be restricted, especially diet. I am only giving this as an example of different life conditions that we face.

Before we begin the subject of yoga, another important aspect in the optimization of human personality is development of awareness. Awareness is a major factor which controls life and the activities of life, and this awareness is not only an intellectual concept, rather it becomes a lifestyle, a way of living.

Let me clarify this by saying that in the life of every individual there are four stages of understanding and experience. These are known as personal strengths, personal weaknesses, personal ambitions and personal needs. Now all of us have within us some strength which can manifest in life, in the form of willpower, clear mind, or what we may call the activities of a genius. These strengths are the main motivating factors which can help us progress and evolve in life, but they are overshadowed by our weaknesses: lack of willpower, lack of clear thinking, and so on. These weaknesses dominate our personality. If we objectively look at our own life, we will feel that our strengths are not that many and weaknesses are many. In a similar way, if we look at the ambition and need aspects of our life, we sometimes feel that our ambitions have become our need and we are not able to differentiate between what our desires are and what our actual needs are. The imbalance in understanding the qualities of strength and the limitations of our weaknesses, and being able to differentiate between ambition and need, leads to acute and chronic frustration in life. These are the four major areas which cover the entire human spectrum, and our habits, routine, awareness, stress and tension.

Now if we look at the modern therapies which exist in the world today and which aim at providing optimization of the human personality, you will notice that none of these therapies can provide a balanced approach for an integrated development of our nature. The lack of an integrated development leads to disharmony between our thoughts and our basic moral philosophy; therefore, there is a split. Our philosophy, our personal philosophy which we adhere to, is not compatible with how we act, behave and perform in life and because of this, many times we feel that our life is a useless life and we are

simply passing our time here. Many times we put the blame on the environment, on situations and circumstances, that there are not enough opportunities to progress and develop in life in a balanced and harmonious way. As seen in the history of humanity, the search of every human being throughout the ages has always been to find a system by which the faculties of the body can be integrated and developed simultaneously with the faculties of mind and emotions. They can be developed and integrated simultaneously with the awareness of spirit. I do not mean the philosophical concept of spirit, rather the practical concept of spirit.

What is the practical concept of spirit? A state where we can experience inner freedom and creativity of personality, where our actions become constructive. The result is automatically a positive result. Spirit here means the inner nature, which is the most important factor in everyone's life. This has been the search of humanity right from the day when the first human being walked upon this earth and started to think, 'What is the body? How did everything come into being? What are the stars? What are the planets? What is the sun?' You know, this appeared in the human mind and that questioning started to guide the destiny of every individual. In this process, different philosophies, different *darshanas*, different systems of belief came into existence. It started the trend which is still being followed today. Each one of us is trying to find satisfaction, contentment and enjoyment in life. Due to lack of understanding of the various factors of our personality, we have not been able to find a solution which is applicable to ourselves, to our environment, to our situation.

This is where yoga comes in. Yoga says that first we have to learn to recognize where there are shortcomings, whether it be in the body, in the mind, in the lifestyle or in the environment. Recognize that first. What are the causes that create disturbance, disease, disharmony? Once we are able to recognize these areas, we need to make an effort to rectify and develop the dormant areas. Many times people come to me and say "Swamiji, I am very disturbed. I want to attain peace, *shanti*." Unfortunately, this word 'shanti', this word

‘peace’ has become such a common word that nobody really understands what it is. I only tell them one thing, “Look, first try to find out the reason why you are not experiencing peace, why you are not peaceful. What are the reasons that are creating the disturbance?” The moment you are able to find out the reason why you are not peaceful, you will see that you attain peace instantaneously. It is only a matter of recognition of where the faults are. If one thinks as an example, ‘all that I am suffering from is asthma or respiratory problems. There is this bronchodilator in front of me, an inhaler, and I just take a whiff of that, and I can continue to do whatever I want to do.’ That bronchodilator inhaler then becomes your support. What kind of life is that?

Knowing that we are sick, we have become dependent on a bronchodilator inhaler without finding an alternate solution which can improve our condition. I have seen people who have come to the ashram for therapy and say, “Swamiji, I am suffering from diabetes; I take insulin injections.” I ask them, “What do you eat?” “Oh, no restrictions at all. I eat everything: rice, *chawal*; dal; vegetable, *sabji*; sweets, *mithai*; everything.” That person has become dependent on an external agent, that of injections. How can yoga help a person who recognizes that he is sick, but is not willing to change? This is our mentality.

We do not want to make an effort to attain something. We have become lethargic. We don’t want to make an effort to improve ourselves. We simply want an instant cure. In this age of instant everything, instant coffee, instant tea, we also want instant therapy. If it is possible for people to get the degree and not have to study, they will want to do that. Instant degree. It is happening in many parts of the country, too. The best example is a college. I won’t mention the name or its location in Bihar. It was only on paper. Physically there was nothing, no infrastructure, no building, no students, nothing, and every year 100 people used to get their MBBS certificate. Things like this do happen. It deteriorates the mentality of the individual.

I believe it is the mentality of those people who have lost the ability to make an effort in life. This trend is going to increase with all the luxuries and comforts that we are being

subjected to day in and day out, where the young ones are now believing that the only power in the world is money power which can buy everything. Money has become more important than their self-image; it has become more important than their willpower; it has become more important than creativity. These are common things that everyone knows, you know, I know, every person in the world knows. We are not able to change it, because we don't know how. We have lost the power of discrimination which can lead us to the realization of situations and how we are reacting within those situations.

Yoga makes an attempt to rectify such situations. Twenty years ago, people used to be frightened, afraid of the word yoga. Today people are accepting yoga as a means to overcome physical problems, reduce their stress levels, find some form of balance, harmony and peace, and so forth. The word 'yoga' has now become a household word. Modern research and investigations have shown that if we can properly apply the principles and practices of yoga, they can help in many situations for which no modern science has an answer.

To give you an example of the results from research that has been conducted in different parts of the world. From the physical aspect, yoga has proved very beneficial for the management of diseases, such as: arthritis, gastric problems, hypertension, angina, indigestion, asthma, diabetes, some forms of cancer, and now we are experimenting with AIDS. Those people who have properly applied the systems of yoga, the practices of yoga, the principles of yoga, are finding that diseases have no space in the life of an individual. No foothold, not even a toehold in the life of an individual. Yoga practices provide a system by which we can treat ourselves, not the disease, and end up treating ourselves and the disease. Treating ourselves means regulating, systematizing and disciplining our life. If you study the traditional literature on yoga, for example, the *raja Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the very first description of yoga is (1:1): *Attha Yoga Anushasanam* – “Yoga is discipline.”

Patanjali was the codifier of yoga, who gave a structure, a system, a sequence to the concept of yoga. At the very outset, Patanjali says that yoga is nothing but a form of discipline, a

discipline which can provide total health, mental harmony and balance, emotional balance and also spiritual development. The basic word here is discipline. This is probably the most important aspect of yoga which we tend to miss in our own discovery. We think of yoga as physical postures because we have been exposed to such physical practices, either through the media, TV or books. Or we think yoga to be a spiritual subject because of its spiritual theories which we consider to be philosophical in nature and not practical. The way to maintain the body and the maintenance of body is itself a discipline. Discipline meaning a sequence, a system, a structure which one has to follow in life. We can use a car as an example: There is a sequence to when you press the accelerator; you can't press the brake and accelerator at the same time. If you want to brake the car, you have to remove the foot from the accelerator. If you want to change gears, you have to go from one, to two, to three, to four. You can't go from one to four. There is a process of adaptation in life. It is this process of adaptation which we have to learn, and that process of adaptation is known as discipline.

Discipline is an English word which we understand in a different way. The word in Sanskrit is *anushasanam*. *Shasan* means to govern, and *anu* is the prefix, meaning the subtle structure of human personality which has the ability to govern, direct, control and guide the subtle nature of human personality. This is the concept of discipline in yoga. The subtle nature of human personality, the ability to know how to govern the subtle nature starts with the recognition of the external factors which influence us, whether it be the environment, family, work situations, or our personal habits, ambitions, desires and needs. As a result, you will find that yoga has been divided into three main groups: the physical aspect of yoga, the mental aspect of yoga and the spiritual aspect of yoga.

Yoga and disease

The physical aspect of yoga is comprised of practices such as asana and pranayama about which I don't have to discuss; this is well known. It is this physical aspect which has proved

to be a very good therapeutic science as well. We use asana, we use pranayama for the management of various problems, illnesses and diseases, such as asthma, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, AIDS and so forth, thus the physical body is optimized.

Next, we come to the mental aspect of yoga. The mental aspect begins by providing mental, intellectual and emotional relaxation and concentration. This aspect helps to reduce and manage the stress factors in life so that they don't influence us in a negative or restrictive way. The management of habits, lifestyle, stress and tension can be achieved by following a very simple technique of inner relaxation and concentration known as yoga nidra. It is a process by which we can learn how to relax and alter the mental states. The moment we are able to do that, a transformation takes place in the mode of thinking, in the mode of behaviour, in the mode of performing an action.

After that, we come to the spiritual aspect of yoga. The spiritual aspect of yoga is a very scientific method to rediscover the potentials of human nature. Science has accepted that a human being today uses only 10% of their brain capacity. Awakening the remaining 90% of the brain capacity is the aim. Modern psychology accepts that out of the totality of mind, we use minimum faculties of our conscious mind. The faculties of the subconscious are untapped. We don't know how to use them, so the awakening and proper utilization of the faculties of subconscious and unconscious is another aim. The spiritual aspect of yoga is to achieve fullness and completeness in life by awakening the faculties that relate to our inner nature, our inner personality.

Please do not confuse the spiritual aspect with the idea of God-realization. God-realization is a symptom of a person who has been able to integrate the total human personality. It is not an achievement; it is a symptom just as a headache is a symptom of stress in life. In the same way, God-realization is a symptom of an integrated personality and this is the approach of yoga.

In a nutshell, we can say that yoga is a system of management, which teaches us how to manage our body, our mind and our life situation. We go for training in business management;

yoga provides us with an opportunity to have training in body and mind management, in behaviour management, in action management, in performance management. The crux of the whole thing is managing the mind, the emotions, the feelings and desires, providing them with the right channels to express their nature and their faculties.

Swamiji from what age should we teach yoga to children?

From the age of 8 onwards.

What other guidelines do you suggest for children and adults who want to practise yoga?

Yoga should never be practised for more than one hour and the practise should be an integrated practice. It should combine some components of asana, some breathing, *pranayama* practices, some of relaxation and some of concentration.

For people of our age, about 20 minutes of asana, which will be about 5 or 6, done very slowly with awareness and 10 minutes of pranayama which will be 2 pranayamas. So, 5 asanas, 2 pranayamas, 15 to 20 minutes of relaxation, such as the practice of yoga nidra, and 5 to 10 minutes of concentration techniques to focus the mind and to develop memory, attention, willpower and so on. This is a very complete and integrated program.

Of course, children will not be able to devote one hour. When they begin, let them start with one asana and one pranayama only, at the age of eight. In the vedic tradition it used to be like that. Are you aware of the upanayanam samskara? During the upanayanam samskara, which nowadays has become ritual, children were taught the practice of surya namaskara as the one asana, and one pranayama, nadi shodhana. They were also given the Gayatri mantra, which used to work like a meditation for them. Therefore, one asana, one pranayama and one mantra. The upanayanam samskara was previously a yogic tradition which people later on altered and said it is religious, but it is not. From the age of eight you can begin and you can continue till the day you actually depart from the world.

What is the effect of meditation? Does it improve concentration or does it relax?

Both; meditation has two purposes. First that of relaxation of the agitations of mind and second, focusing the attention of mind.

Do you have a special course for children in Calcutta where they can come and start up?

From time to time we conduct programs here. Seminars are conducted in different parts of the city, north, central and south. In these programs there are special classes for children, too. We did it last year and I think we have done it this year also. No, not this time.

Swamiji, when is the best time for yoga nidra?

In my opinion it is the time when you come back from your activities and work and you are more free and relaxed and you don't have to look ahead to continuation of activities. At night when you go to bed, use that time to practise yoga nidra.

Do you have a permanent centre here in Calcutta?

No, at present we don't, although we did from 1977 to 1984. First, we had a centre on Theatre Road, then we had one in Tollygunge and after 1984 and 1985 due to some changes in the structure of the organization, we had to close it and we have not yet revived it. I am sure that with all your support and good wishes one day we will have one again.

What are the techniques you are using for AIDS?

The AIDS project is very much in its infancy right now. I am not in a position to give you an exact procedure, because it is still at an experimental level. We have seen this program play a very vital role to increase the efficiency of the immune system. We have always maintained that more dangerous than any form of disease, is another disease which has no treatment; it is known as DIAFS, Diseased Induced Anxiety and Fear Syndrome. Doctors don't know about this either. They only know up to AIDS but this one is more detrimental than any other form of disease.

You will be surprised to know what practices we used to treat cancer in the cancer research which was conducted in Australia. The first practice was yoga nidra, the second practice was pranayama and the third practice was mantra japa. We did not touch asanas at all. These three practices work at the level of DIAFS. Yoga nidra removes that syndrome altogether; pranayama increases the efficiency and strengthens the immune system and mantra helps to focus the awareness, the attention and to develop the healing faculty of mind. You know that concept, 'mind over matter'. Mantra acts in that process. These three were the only practices we used in the treatment of cancer. The doctors who were treating the patients have since passed away, and those patients who were suffering from cancer are still alive today.

It is very difficult to say that this practice will apply here and this will apply there. It is not like the allopathic medical system in which for anxiety you take this, for asthma you take this, for diabetes you take this and for headache this. No. Here we are trying to manage the cause. AIDS is a symptom, but the cause is in the immune system, so we have to work at that level. Thus, we are not working to remove the manifestations of cancer from the body, rather we are trying to cut out the roots. Whatever is on top is there; however, once the roots are cut the tree is going to die anyway. That is the approach we have been adopting and it has been very successful.

Do you recommend any particular pranayama practice?

It depends on the age group of the people and what they are suffering from. The commonly used pranayamas are: nadi shodana, bhramari, kapalbhata and ujjayi. These are the four practices which are modified according to age and physical condition.

If one is practising yoga and meditation, are there any special dietary considerations to be followed?

Yoga is not too restrictive on food. It only says that whatever you eat should be easily digestible, it should not excite the system and it should not bring a state of lethargy into the

system. You should feel dynamic; you should feel the energy which is being derived from the food. In relation to food habits, I think ayurveda complements yoga very well. We use three things: allopathic diagnostics, yogic practices and ayurvedic dietary recommendations.

Yoga for the Mind

2 June 1995, Bharatya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai

PRACTICE

Sit down comfortably on the chair, hands placed on top of the thighs, feet firmly on the ground, spine erect, head straight, eyes closed.

For a few moments become aware of the body posture. Take your awareness down to your feet. See them firmly placed on the ground. *(pause)* Move the awareness up from the feet towards the knees. *(pause)* From the knees come to the hips. *(pause)* From the hips, move your attention up along the spinal passage to the shoulders. *(pause)* From the shoulders, move the attention down the arms to the elbows and hands. *(pause)*

Observe the whole body mentally. Observe the head, the trunk, arms, legs. *(pause)* Complete awareness of the whole body. *(long pause)*

Now become aware of the flow of the natural breath. Observe the flow of the natural breath. As you breathe in, feel the breath come up from navel to the eyebrow centre, and as you breathe out feel the breath go down from the eyebrow centre and out through the nose. At the time of inhalation, observe the movement of breath from the navel to the eyebrow centre; at the time of exhalation see the breath come out from the nostrils. Watch this process for a few moments. Focus your whole attention on the breath. Feel the breath at the time of inhalation and at the time of exhalation. *(long pause)*

Now extend the awareness outside. Observe the environment around you: become aware of the different sounds, different movements around you, become aware of the temperature around the body. Become aware of your environment, your surroundings. Acknowledge each condition, each situation, each sound, each movement that is taking place around you. Extend your consciousness, extend your awareness into the environment. (*long pause*) And now again bring your attention back into the whole body and focus on the region of the eyebrow centre. Focus your awareness in the region of the eyebrow centre and there visualize a jyoti burning brightly. (*long pause*) With the attention fixed on the symbol of the flame, breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* with me three times all together.

Repeat after me: *Om shanti, shanti, shanti.*

The word *shanti* means peace. Experience the state of peace and silence in the body and in the mind. Discover the state of silence, the state of peace that one can feel within. (*long pause*)

Hari Om Tat Sat. Slowly open your eyes and move the body.

The subject today is management of the mind through yoga, but I am not going to describe or define the mind – you have first-hand experience of how the mind functions. I am going to concentrate on the principles and practices which are taught in yoga to give a direction to one's mind.

The basic philosophy of yoga is that a human being lives in and experiences many dimensions of experience at one time, at one given moment. All these different dimensions of our life are interrelated. If one dimension is absent from this group, life is not recognized as life, but as death.

Dimensions of experience

What are these different dimensions? The physical, comprising the senses: the *karmendriyas*, the physical organs of action, and the *jnanendriyas*, the organs of perception. When these organs of action and organs of perception interact with

the world, then we experience the physical body as a living body. If the senses did not interact with the world, with the environment, we would not realize or know that our body is alive. There would be some form of disconnection or separation between the body and the experiences related with the body. This physical dimension is known as *annamayakosha* in yogic terminology.

The second dimension of experience is the mental dimension: ego-related experiences, arrogance, selfishness, assertiveness, aggressiveness; memory-related experiences: impressions of the past, projections for the future, understanding of the present; intellect-related experiences: the ability to analyze, criticize, understand, comprehend; and thought-related experiences. These constitute the mental dimension, which is known as *manomaya kosha* in yogic terminology.

The third dimension is energetic. This energetic dimension is both gross and subtle, physical and mental. The physical expressions are guided and controlled by *prana shakti*, the vital energy, the vital life force. The mental expressions, the mental dimension, is controlled and governed by *chitta shakti*, the subtle, mental pranic force. This dimension of energy is experienced as vitality, movement and motion of the mind, strength and stamina of the body and senses. In yogic terminology it is known as *pranamaya kosha*.

The fourth dimension is the dimension of pure logic; not just linear logic, rather the totality of human knowledge, understanding and the expression of that knowledge. Pure logic should not conjure up the image of someone who is unsmiling, inquisitive and mathematical, an image of an extra-terrestrial with a big head. Pure logic here represents the state of awakened consciousness, in which the entire picture is seen at one glance and is not limited to just one particular concept or idea. It is a state of life where the physical, the manifest experiences of the mind have been transcended, and it is a state of life where you can establish yourself in consciousness. It is known as *vijnanamaya kosha*. In normal language *vijnana* means science; however, in yogic language

it means special knowledge of the self as opposed to the knowledge of phenomenal science, therefore it is special knowledge or detailed knowledge. *Vishesh* means special or specific; *vishesh jnana*, specific knowledge, when these two words come together it is known as *vijnana*.

What is this specific knowledge in relation to human life? It is the awareness of consciousness. Yoga has stated many times that our consciousness is like an iceberg, of which we can see only a small part above the water, and the vast majority is submerged and unknown to us. Awareness of this totality of the complete consciousness is the *vijnana* of yoga.

The fifth dimension is *anandamayakosha*, the dimension of bliss, where all visions and distinctions of me and you and the whole concept of duality dissolves, and there is only the experience of the continuity of life. That experience of the continuity of life is known as *Satyam*, the truth; as *Shivam*, the auspicious, the constructive, the creative, and as *Sundaram*, the beautiful.

These are the five dimensions of human experience. As human beings we interact in all these dimensions simultaneously; however, our perception is guided by the senses, our logic is guided by the manifest aspect of the mind, the gross mind, and we miss the understanding of many events and situations in life. In the confusion created by the senses and the mental states, we are unable to find our balance.

Creating harmony

There is no use talking about the ills of material life. It has its plus points and minus points. There is no use talking about the ill we create in our own life. We are the creators of our thoughts, our desires, our actions. When we create these thoughts, desires and actions, we are involved with them. They represent the desire to fulfil the ego. Since we create our own thoughts, desires and actions, we also create our own pain and happiness. This pain and happiness of which we are the creator, then influences and alters our performance, actions and behaviour in life. Thus, we create our own destinies as we create our own efforts, *purusharthas*. When we create our

destiny, when we create our own thoughts, we create or project our direction in life and this creation is not combined with human wisdom.

These creations are combined with *raga* and *dvesha*, attachment and rejection. Our thoughts, our actions and our desires reflect our attachment and rejection. *Raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion, are the forces which govern the activity of the senses and the activity of the mind. What can the solution be to focus the mind, to awaken its dormant potential and realize the submerged mind? Yogis have said that mind is a force and this force needs to be realized. The entire system of yoga is based on the principle of managing mind. The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali reflect this sentiment. At the outset, Patanjali talks of the *vrittis* and says that yoga is the way of controlling, guiding and channelling the *vrittis* of the mind, of realigning the *vrittis* of the mind: (1:2) *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah*.

Yoga has recognized from the beginning that if we want to experience completeness, wholeness, fulfilment, joy and peace in our life, if we want to realize the harmony that exists between life and in the interaction with life, then we have to find ways to manage the mind. It is with this intention that in the *Yoga Sutras*, in the description of the eight limbs of raja yoga, ashtanga yoga, Sage Patanjali, has concentrated more on the management of mind. The four stages of yoga, which relate to human behaviour, to the human body, are *yama* and *niyama*, *asana* and *pranayama*. The remaining four stages of yoga deal specifically with the development of concentration and the management of mind: *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*.

Overcoming limitations

Why so much emphasis? Emphasis is given because it has been recognized that the nature of the mind is to be dissipated and distracted. If we go from the philosophical point of view, then we can say that it is the nature of the mind to move from one sense object to another sense object. If we analyze it in relation to our practical life, the conclusion may be the same,

however the perception is different. What is that perception? In order to satisfy itself, in order to create a sense of happiness, in order to create a sense of fulfilment, the mind associates with objects that can give pleasure. And that's all.

Still, the pleasure and happiness we derive from this association between mind and object can never be permanent, because there is no identification with the process of association. In the absence of this identification, in the absence of the ability to merge the mind with one experience, we express different emotions which reflect different moods and different needs of our personality. When you are frustrated you are reflecting a mood of your personality. When you are under stress and tension you are reflecting a state of your personality. When you are experiencing jealousy, anger or hatred; when you are feeling competitive, you are reflecting different states of your nature, of your personality.

Each state, each expression of personality is bound to create an impression. That impression is analyzed as right or wrong, good or bad. Yoga says that it is incorrect to categorize everything as good and bad. The classification of good and bad is only a reflection of your understanding, your analysis, your *chintan* and your *manana*.

What you can label today as good and what you can label as bad, may not be valid tomorrow. From our perspective, we are classifying one experience or action as good, and another as bad, yet are we convinced that what we are classifying today will be like that eternally? If you know that what you are classifying today will eternally be right or wrong, then you have the right to classify it as right or wrong, on the other hand if you don't know and just believe and speculate, then that is wrong. It is for this reason that yoga says, 'Don't see anything in life as good or bad'. The moment you see anything in life as good or bad, positive and negative, you are creating an idea, an understanding according to your perception, your *buddhi*, your knowledge. It may be applicable to you today in today's context, but keep an open mind. It may change tomorrow, so be ready to accept it when it changes.

Why does the mind jump? Is it jumping only for fulfilment? Is it jumping only to find satisfaction in joy and happiness? Is the mind trained to recognize what it requires? No, it is not trained to recognize what it requires.

The four purusharthas

Just to change the subject for a few moments. I want to tell you of the four basic efforts in life, *purusharthas*. These four basic efforts in life are for security and status, known as *artha* purushartha; for fulfilment of desires, aspirations and ambitions, *kama* purushartha; for living a righteous life, a pure, clean life, known as *dharma* purushartha; and the fourth effort is to realize one's own true nature, known as *moksha* purushartha.

Education should not only be material or job-orientated, education is not only to fine-tune one's skills to survive in society, education should also have the component of making one realize the harmony of one's being. In the structure of today's education, we are told that in order to survive in society, in order to progress in society and the community, we need to have certain thoughts guide us. These thoughts reflect money and how to go up the social ladder; it teaches the philosophy of 'the more you have the more you will be recognized in society'. The irony is that due to the lack of 'right education', the education today has only emphasized the purusharthas of artha and kama and this is what we teach our children, too.

The purusharthas for artha and kama are not bad; they are necessities of life, but they should not be our main aim in life. We need to educate ourselves in the ways of righteous living, and we need to educate ourselves to realize that there are other experiences in life which are non-material that we need to aspire for to experience the absolute and total wellbeing of our personality.

To experience total wellbeing as human beings, the mind needs to be educated in the principles of dharma and moksha along with artha and kama; then the education is complete. In the absence of a complete education and when all our

efforts are being directed towards material, financial and social security, the quest for fame, recognition and affection, then it is natural that the mind, untrained to experience the inner life, the inner nature, is bound to come into conflict with itself.

Developing awareness

This is when yoga training comes in. Yogic training begins with the development of awareness. The expressions of the senses should not be mechanical. The expressions of the mind should not just be reactive expressions. The first principle in the yogic method of mind management is to develop the component of awareness of the senses and the mind. Awareness implies recognition of the present conditions in life, of the present situation. It implies recognition of the beneficial and the restrictive aspects of the present environment, the present condition, the present situation. Awareness implies desire to make this condition a better one; it is not just 'I know'. There are various components of awareness too: recognition of the situation is one form of awareness; recognition of the beneficial or restrictive aspects of the situation is another form; recognition of the need to make the situation more comfortable, more fulfilling and enriching is yet another form. These are the three major components of *sajagta*, of awareness and just saying, 'I know this' does not suffice.

It is after you are able to observe and analyze a situation, realize and know a situation, that the practice of concentration begins. Once many years ago, I asked my guru, "How is it that people can become tense and not know how to relax?" He said to me, "To achieve relaxation is the easiest thing in life, the simplest thing in life. We are unable to do it because we are too distracted, we are too caught up in the vortex of our thoughts, in the vortex of our desires. We have connected ourselves to too many different places. We are being pulled from different sides simultaneously. The moment you are able to disconnect your mind from different pulls and it becomes steady, it will relax. Reduce the area of interaction of mind and it will relax. Increase the area of interaction of mind

and it will go into tension.” In today’s context, in society, our mind interacts in a very big area and therefore the stress and tension.

While sitting here we are thinking of New York and London, Sydney, Timbuktu and Tokyo, about our friends and families who live thousands of miles away. We are worrying if they are healthy or sick. We are worrying about our friends, our relatives, our near and dear ones. We are concerned. In today’s society the interaction of our mind happens in a very broad area. In yoga, to achieve relaxation we reduce the areas of interaction, and as we reduce them we release tension, we achieve relaxation, we achieve concentration.

Relaxed concentration

In the next step, after developing awareness, after trying to build up awareness in our life, we try to focus. The focus has to be on something physical, *sakara*, because the mind cannot identify with something abstract. The mind needs to be trained to identify with something abstract and formless. In the initial stages, form has to be provided for the mind to focus and reduce its area of activity. Thus yogis said concentrate on the breath, focus on the breath, observe the flow of the breath and experience the breath in different parts of the body. Give the mind the ability to withdraw from its thoughts, give the mind the opportunity to stand back from its desires and aspirations, and give the mind the direction where it can focus upon its own activities; therefore, awareness of breath.

Another area of focus is mantra. In the yogic concept, mantras are associated with chakras. Those people who have studied kundalini yoga, those who are studying kriya yoga, will know that each syllable, each consonant, each vowel is associated with a chakra. The combination of different consonants and vowels activate different chakras and once these chakras are activated, corresponding changes take place in the brain and the mind, consciousness is realized, and that is the reason yogis said mantras are also beneficial for relaxation and concentration of mind.

Relaxation and concentration of mind is a product of your effort to experience harmony in your nature and harmony in your personality. As I have mentioned earlier, we live in many dimensions of experience and whatever effort we make at the physical level will also create ripples and changes and experiences in other dimensions. Whatever we do on the mental level will create a corresponding change in the physical, and also create a corresponding change in the pranamaya and vijnanamaya koshas. This movement, this wave, this vibration, covers the entire personality and nature of an individual.

Even when you practise meditation with a technique such as ajapa japa in which you are concentrating on breath and repeating a mantra, you are not only working at the level of the mind; you are working in all five different dimensions at the same time. Even if you observe your thoughts and try to develop good thoughts, optimistic, positive thoughts, you are not working at the thought level alone, you are working in all the different levels of personality. For that reason, yogis have always maintained that positive thoughts have power, just as negative thoughts have power, to alter the personality. So think positive. Optimistic thoughts and attitudes have the power to transform one's personality, so don't be pessimistic. Be optimistic. Don't identify with the absence of something in your life, rather identify with what you have gained in life. Don't be fearful of losing something in life; be aware of what you have gained in life. That is the secret of happiness, and that is the secret of peace, and that is the secret of mind management.

The secret of happiness

It is the attitude. You may practise meditation, but it is not meditation which is going to give you the ability to control your mind. It is the attitude that you develop with the practise of meditation. What are the attitudes you develop with the practise of meditation? Optimism, positive thinking and recognizing the needs of one's personality. These are the three basic attainments of meditation.

God comes much later. Don't put the cart before the horse. In the spectrum of meditation, God does not appear until the very end. Don't think that in order to be spiritual, in order to manage one's mind, one has to think of God. God is not the criteria to attain peace. God is not the object of attainment in order to experience happiness. No. Begin with the basics of your personality. Begin with the conditions that influence you right now and learn to manage those.

Don't struggle if bad thoughts come; make the effort to bring in good thoughts. Maybe you do bad deeds. Don't feel guilty about it; make the effort to do good deeds the next time you have the opportunity. You may behave badly. Don't worry about it. Everybody behaves badly, you are not the only person; however, the next time you have the opportunity, try to behave in the right manner in the same situation or circumstances.

This happens when you are positive and optimistic and when you love life. This happens when you love life, when you love yourself, when you love the world. Yoga is not a process of going into isolation. It is not escaping from life. It is escaping into life with arms wide open. The day you understand this secret, you will realize yoga and the day you realize yoga, you will be the happiest person. Since we have come to the end of our time today, I have just one submission to make to all of you: give yoga a chance and give wisdom a chance in your life.

Yoga – A True Friend

9 October 1995, DIPAS (Defence Institute of Physiology
and Applied Sciences), Delhi

I greet all of you who are present here, the scientists of modern India, on behalf of the scientists of ancient India. We are here to discuss some aspects of yoga, its relation with day-to-day living, the environment, health, stress and its relevance to our moral and social conditions.

In this context at the outset itself, I would like to make it very clear that yoga does not come in the category of science although people today think of yoga as a science, including me. It also does not come in the category of a religion although people believe that is a part of the Hindu system. I believe that it does not even come under the category of spiritual practice. For me, science is global, religion is social and spirituality is personal and universal, whereas yoga becomes the medium through which we learn to appreciate and realize the dormant potentials that are within every one of us.

Awakening dormant potential

It is with the realization and awakening of these dormant potentials that we can become a better scientist, a better religious person, a better spiritual person and a better human being. I aim for the last one, to become a better human being, because this was the message, the mandate, which was given to me by my guru Swami Satyananda Saraswati, “Learn to stand on your own two feet”. That is what I have been trying to do since my involvement with yoga began and whether I succeed or not is a different matter, but the effort is there.

One more thing I would like to clarify here, is that yoga is not a select group of practices dealing with the body or health, nor is it just a group of practices dealing with the mind or human nature. If I may quote from the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the very first sutra defines the aim and purpose of yoga (1:1): *Atha yoga anushasanam*. Patanjali has not said ‘atha yogah shariravijnanam’ nor has he said ‘atha yogah asanam’ or ‘atha yogah pranayamam’ or ‘atha yogah adhyatmam’ or ‘atha yogah dhyanam’. Nothing like that. He has, for a definite purpose, used the word anushasanam.

Anushasanam – subtle governance

What is the meaning, the definition, the concept of anushasan? Once we understand this, the process of yoga becomes clear to us. We are going to make an attempt to understand it, because anushasan is not a discipline. Generally, the term *anushasan* is translated as discipline, yet if we look deeply into the meaning of this word, we will discover that it is not imposing discipline upon oneself. This is possibly the most vital understanding of yoga that we can gain. Normally, when we think of yoga or when we think of a practice, we think of imposing it on our present situation and lifestyle and there is conflict. Then we make different excuses: ‘I don’t have the time to do it’, ‘I don’t have the inclination to do it’, while for all the useless things in life, we find plenty of time and no excuse.

Shasana means ‘to govern, to rule, to direct, to control’, and *anu* is the prefix implying ‘subtlety’, therefore *anushasanam* means governing the subtle nature, the subtle manifestation, the subtle components of human life: the personality, nature, mind, behaviour and attitude. Now this is definitely a very good, broad definition of yoga. If a person can direct, control and focus the energies, channel and activate the different faculties and components of the human body and mind, you can imagine the state of creativity, expression and lifestyle.

If we consider yoga from this angle, we see the relevance of the different practices of yoga, whether they be physical, psychological, mental or spiritual in nature. Every personality is different; there are no two people in the world the same,

each one is different. Everyone's face is different; each personality is different. We are dealing with so many different forms of personalities, different forms of mentalities and yet yoga is applicable to each one. Why? For the reason that in yoga we don't deal with manifest symptoms, we deal with the cause.

Deep-seated stress

Let me make this clearer by saying that what we experience in our body as an illness or disease is only a symptom of an imbalance deep in the human psyche, an imbalance that has already taken place, a stress that has already taken root in the deepest levels of human personality; however, we are only treating the symptoms externally and not treating the cause.

This reminds me of a true story in my life. When I was living with another swami in the US, together we were both managing the ashram. We had a second-hand refrigerator, and it had a red bulb on it which used to flash every time something went wrong. When it was not cooling properly, when the door was not closed properly or when the freezer was malfunctioning, it used to flash. Being second-hand, it used to flash quite often, and every time it would flash, we would look at each other and say, "Time to repair it again!" Suddenly one day, I noticed that the light had not flashed for about the last three months. I mentioned this to the other swami, "Isn't it strange that for the past three months, this refrigerator is giving very good service?" And he said, "Yes, it's because I have disconnected the red light."

Stress is like that. People talk a lot about tension, about stress, and they say stress is the cause of all problems, difficulties, conflicts, phobias, insecurities, psychological depressions and anxieties. Today, I think in a slightly different way because I have thought about this a lot. Is stress the cause of all ill in our life? I think it is not the cause. The cause is our inability to cope with changing conditions, and when we are unable to cope with the changing conditions, stress is accumulated, then stress is intensified, and then the negative results of stress are felt in our life.

What is the key here? The human inability to cope with the changing environment, with changing circumstances. What do we need to do here? Do we need to fight stress or do we need to develop and enhance our own potential and capacity to cope with new situations? My subject today, is how to deal with stress.

Many people throughout the world have told us to manage stress and they have prescribed different things. People run stress management courses. They teach how to deal with physical stress. They teach how to deal with emotional stress. They teach how to deal with environmental stress. They teach how to deal with social stress. So many different forms of stresses are there. Are they successful? Such programs are not successful as they look at the management of stress and the imbalances it causes from an external viewpoint, whereas the actual reason and the cause are inside.

We therefore, have to find a method, an approach by which we can increase our own physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, psychic and spiritual efficiency and creativity. In this process, a few ideas, a few thoughts came to my mind. They include maintenance of the physiological structure so that optimum health can be experienced in our physical body. Our physical body is the most misused organ on this planet. Believe me, it is true. You get a nice car and because you want to maintain the car and make the best use of it, you are very regular in making sure that it goes for servicing; the three free services and then services every time it runs for a specific number of kilometres. You know that if you do not do proper servicing on the car, at one point in time, it is bound to have a breakdown. On the other hand, how many times have you serviced your own car, the body? Since the time you have taken birth until today, how many times have you serviced your own body? Some people may say, "Oh, I go for holidays; there I relax", but that is not servicing of the body.

Our human system, from the time that we have taken birth, is continuously undergoing stress, wear and tear, and when it reaches the chronic stage, the acute stage, then that wear and tear of our system manifests in the form of a

disease. Take the physical body: whether it is arthritis, asthma, diabetes, digestive problems or problems of the cardiovascular system, when we get sick, we resort to different medications in order to help ourselves, yet what are the causes creating stress in the body? Diet, number one; environment, number two; mismanagement of our daily routine, the routine that is required by the body, number three.

Towards balance and harmony

In our body there are certain biorhythms which become active at daytime and subside at night. These biorhythms of the body, which represent the optimum performance of various organs at certain times, and the relaxation of the functioning of different organs at other times, are disturbed. Disturbing these is possibly the worst kind of stress that one can encounter in one's life, worse than environmental stress or dietary stress, because here we are altering and affecting the entire biorhythmic structure of the body. When we practise *asanas*, the yogic postures, this is precisely the area where we are trying to balance. Through the practice of asanas:

- The functioning of internal biorhythms is harmonized;
- The pranic energy in our system becomes regulated;
- The blockages and tensions in different muscles are removed;
- There is harmony in the performance of the sympathetic and the parasympathetic activities of the body.

There are many other benefits, nevertheless we are only going to deal with these four major points. Once we attain these four major benefits in our life with the practice of asana, then there is little chance of the body encountering or undergoing the internal stress conditions and one can limit the intensity of an illness in the physical structure.

Managing extremes

Mental stress is caused by different factors: work environment, family environment and social environment. I am sure you are well aware of those factors.

Just to give you an example. Our late General Joshi had approached the Bihar School of Yoga for training the

army personnel, especially in the Siachen glacier area and in the Bikaner desert area because of the extreme climactic variations. Two swamis went and conducted specific training programs in Leh, at the base camp in the Siachen area and in Bikaner. While the swamis were conducting those training programs, they underwent similar exertions as those the army personnel undergo, to experience for themselves what happens, how one can manage and how we can teach the military to cope with it.

The results were incredible, especially in the Siachen base camp. You are well aware of the difficulties that soldiers face in such harsh conditions, where their worst enemy is isolation due to the complete disconnection of communication; they suffered a lot from mental and emotional stress.

At that time, what helps their mental condition and state? They were taught a few practices of concentration. The first practice was of *trataka*, fixing the gaze on a point of light, like the tip of a candle. Normally we use *trataka* to improve concentration, to improve one-pointed awareness, yet in those conditions, it also helped stop the dissipation of their emotions and thoughts, reduced the level of fear, insecurity and the level of anxiety.

Another practice taught to them was *ajapa japa*. *Ajapa japa* is the practice of repeating a mantra with inhalation and exhalation. To give you an example of *japa*, repetition, we chanted the mantra *Om* three times before the start of this discussion. Now for many of you, it might have seemed like religious chanting. I can assure you, it is not a religious chanting; it has a scientific background.

In 1979, I was living in Barcelona, Spain. One day I was invited to a hospital because somebody there had this brainwave to teach some yoga technique to people coming for operations, as a pre-operation preparation. Generally, when people come for surgeries, for operations, they are very nervous because they think, 'We are going to be given anaesthesia, our body is going to be cut, we are not sure whether it will be successful'. All those different kinds of fears are there and how they are going to survive, and it is a terrible

condition. I am sure even in your hospital similar conditions exist; people are very nervous, seeking assurances from the doctors all the time.

When this doctor called me, he said, “Swamiji, we want to do some research on a very simple technique of yoga which people can do in five minutes, which will lower their mental resistance, make them stronger, optimistic and positive when they are to undergo surgery. What do you suggest?” I said, “Let us get ten people, any person who has no background of yoga, and monitor them with different biofeedback instruments like the GSR, the EEG and the ECG, while for five minutes they chant the mantra *Om* with their breath.”

That was no problem; I was probably the only person in the hospital with a yogic background. They were all Christians and they were practising this mantra *Om*, and we were watching the graphs in the other room. The graphs showed their brainwaves and which brainwave pattern was more active. When the patients first came into the room, they were very nervous. Not only for the reason that they were going to do something new and unknown to them, but due to the underlying anxiety, ‘We have to undergo this surgery and we are unsure if we are going to survive or not’. You could imagine the state of their beta brainwaves.

In five minutes of this *Om* chanting, delta became predominant. Their facial expression changed and they came out of the room with a more positive state of brain; I don’t know about their minds, but definitely in a more positive state of brain: more relaxed, more tranquil. And believe it or not, since then, whenever people are admitted for surgery, for major or minor operations, they are still practising five minutes of *Om* chanting at that hospital. It has become a routine pre-operation care for the patients.

A lot of research work has been done on ajapa japa also, investigating the effect of coordination between breath and mantra on the human brain and in the human mind. Without a doubt, breath has been considered to be a mirror of our mental states. When we are at rest, when we are peaceful, the breath is slower and gentle. When we are under stress, the

breath comes in very shallow, with short gasps, and there is a lack of control over the autonomic nervous system. The first step is simply to observe our breath and then later we can combine a mantra with it.

The power of mantra

I will also describe to you the psychology of mantra, then you will understand that breath and mantra become a very powerful tool to manage mental, emotional and psychic stress.

Mantras. What are they? For us, they may be words which have some form of religious connotation. Take for example, the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*. You will say, “Oh, it’s a Shaiva mantra”; *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*, you will say it’s a Krishna mantra. To give them an identity, you will associate them with a religious belief. Kundalini yoga says no.

If you have ever looked at a picture of the chakras, you will find that from mooladhara to ajna, the total number of petals on those six chakras, is fifty. On these fifty petals, the fifty different letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are written, and they are the mantras of the different petals relating to a particular chakra. The fifty letters or *varnakshara* are described in the *Maheshwara Sutras*, which contain grammatical descriptions in Sanskrit.

When we repeat the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*, we are not becoming a Shaivite; we are not adoring or worshipping a deity. We are stimulating the force of these different chakras. *Om* is the *bija*, seed, sound of ajna chakra, which is responsible for the clarity of mind, the creativity of mind, the intuitive faculty of mind. Similarly, *na*, *ma*, *shi*, *va*, *ya* are sounds associated with different centres. *Ya* or *yam* is the bija mantra of anahata. *Va* or *vam* is the bija mantra of swadhisthana. *Na* and *ma* are petal mantras of manipura, and *sha* is a petal mantra of mooladhara. The vowels are petal mantras of vishuddhi. Therefore, there are different sounds corresponding to different chakras. When we sit down quietly, become aware of the breath for a few moments, regulate our breathing and add a mantra to it with concentration, with mental relaxation, then the mental repetition of the mantra creates a set of vibrations

within our pranic and psychic personality and these vibrations create a force.

Does the army ever march across a bridge? The answer is no. When they cross the bridge, they have to break step. Why? So many steps in unison create a vibration, a hammering effect and that can break the bridge, shatter a bridge. They have to break step. When you repeat a mantra, *Om, Om* or *So Ham*, or any other mantra with the breath, whether it be a religious mantra or a yogic mantra, we are creating a vibration in our psychic personality, in our mental personality and in our emotional personality, which helps to change these patterns.

If you have ten grandfather clocks in a room with the pendulums swinging at random, in the evening when you come in to the room you will see that they are all swinging in rhythm. It happens because the frequency, the vibrations become uniform after some time. The same thing can happen inside the human being. Your thoughts, your emotions, your feelings and mental projections, insecurities, phobias, or whatever the expression of your mind at one given moment can easily be channelled with the force of the mantra. These different expressions of mind are emissions of prana, and the higher energy of the mantras being repeated can harmonize that energy from the mind.

Yogis have maintained that just as the body is manifest energy, visible, compressed energy, in the same way, mind also has a structure and a form of energy, which is subtle. The emissions of the subtle mind can be experienced in the form of a thought, an emotion, a state of rationality or irrationality, positivity or negativity. What happens in the dimension of our mind ultimately influences our behaviour and performance; however, the original form of mind is of energy and the mind emits subtle energy.

When you begin to repeat a mantra, whether it is verbal or mental doesn't really matter, you create a different pattern of energy vibration in your body as well as in your mind. That created pattern of energy then acts like a magnet to attract the mental energies which are at present, being dissipated in all directions. Therefore, in meditation you have the subjective

experience of mental concentration. Why concentration? Focusing of energies has taken place: peace. Why peace, *shanti*? Dissipation has stopped. Distractions have stopped. Clarity of mind begins. You are able to be in tune with the passive nature of mind and not the destructive, uncontrolled, dynamic state of mind. This is the subjective experience of meditation that everybody has. The actual cause, the actual reason is management of mental energy. As a result, we found that the practice of ajapa japa was a very efficient tool to manage the psychological problems and disturbances which our people faced in the harsh climatic conditions and in total isolation while in Siachen.

We had also experimented with a set of asanas up in the Siachen base camp, a group of asanas known as the pawanmuktasana series. In those extremely cold conditions, where people are heavily clothed, the pawanmuktasana series is the best. Asana, pranayama, trataka and ajapa japa were the four basic things, and the most important thing was the fifth technique, yoga nidra, relaxation.

Yoga nidra

If we can incorporate the component of relaxation in our life, not sleep but relaxation, our life will change drastically and dramatically. We have lost the ability to relax.

We have some slides which were taken in London by a computerized machine known as BEAM. It takes a topographical picture of the brain's electrical activity and maps it, showing the different brainwaves in colour codes, not as zigzag lines, but as colours covering different areas of the brain. It is an incredible machine and we were doing one experiment with it to see how the state of relaxation affects and alters the brainwaves.

We used a technique known as *yoga nidra*, which means yogic sleep. Yoga nidra is the state or the practice of sleepless sleep, in which the body is relaxed and the mind is also made to relax. In normal sleep, when you go home and get inside the bed, you are never alone. All the devils of the day and of your work go with you to bed, whether it is work pressure,

family pressure, social pressure, whatever it may be. Although the mind cuts itself off, those impressions continue to alter the pattern of mind. Therefore, the next day we still feel tired, we feel that we have not rested properly and we require more sleep. In yoga nidra, totally the opposite happens. You sleep, yet at the same time you are awake. Therefore, it is known as the sleepless sleep.

When we were doing this research, we scanned drunkards who had gone to sleep after drinking bottles and bottles and bottles of God knows what. We also took brain pictures of a person who was experiencing a nightmare: sweating, yelling, moving the body, nevertheless, still in deep sleep, and fighting off something during a nightmare. If I were to put those two slides in front of you and ask you to differentiate between the brains of the person who is having the nightmare and the person who has fallen asleep drunk, you would not be able to distinguish between the two. The colours in the brain were all active, dynamic colours: the ash colour, red colour, orange colour and yellow colour. All were chosen to represent very high activity of the brainwaves, distorted activity. The machine registers a very different spectrum during the twenty minutes of yoga nidra practice. The brain of the person practising yoga nidra showed a very deep blue, uniform colour, which indicated delta waves. We found that those people who have perfected yoga nidra can, in one hour of yoga nidra practice, fulfil the sleep of four hours. This was another important technique that we had taught the soldiers.

Discover the secret

Many aspects of yoga were considered to be *gupta*, secret, *rahasyamaya*, but I tell you that nothing is gupta or rahasyamaya. They were considered gupta because of a lack of understanding. If we can understand a thing properly, no problem; nothing is secret. If we can't understand it properly, then of course it is secret. This happened with pranayama, too. Even today, in this day and age, I have come across books on yoga by modern authors, which say pranayama is a very dangerous thing and one should not do it. I have to laugh at such statements.

Pranayamas are the most effective practices to manage imbalances in the nervous system, imbalances in the brain and therefore, imbalances in the mind. Possibly, they are the most important practices to be incorporated into your research on yoga. It is not necessary for you to do asana research, but definitely do pranayama research. It may not be necessary for you to do relaxation research, but definitely do pranayama research since it is the most important aspect of yoga, linking the nervous system with the brain and the brain with mind. It links these three areas of our existence together and energy, *prana*, is possibly the most vital and the most important aspect of our life.

What prana is, I would request that you discover. I have read many things in the traditions, in the scriptures, in the yogic literatures, yet how it can be defined scientifically, I do not know. Sometimes I wonder whether these subtle things can be defined scientifically or not. Science is looking for something physical, whereas there are myriad things in this cosmos which are not physical. How can one measure infinity with an instrument? If you can measure infinity by any instrument, then infinity is not infinity.

Consequently, it is a challenge for us to try to discover what prana is and how it relates to us as it has been described in the tradition, that prana is the life force. It is the green colour of the grass and plants. It is the hardness of the stone. It is the softness of cotton. It is the life force of a human being. The tradition says everything in this world is prana, the force of life, and everything is vibrating with that pulsation of life, from the so-called inanimate objects to the animate forms.

The prana in our body enjoys a very special place. The yogis have described our body as *annamaya kosha*; the sheath of matter, the physical body, the muscles, the bones, the nerves, the blood, the marrow, and so on. *Pranamaya kosha* is the sheath of energy, the dimension of energy. *Manomaya kosha* is the sheath of the mind; in manomaya we will have the individual picture. *Vijnanamaya kosha* is the dimension of cosmic understanding and wisdom, where you have the universal picture. *Anandamaya kosha* is the sheath or dimension

of absolute attainment, perfection, completeness and bliss, *purnata* and *ananda*.

Science has looked into the annamaya kosha, the physical body. Psychology has looked into the manomaya kosha, the mind. Para-psychology is making an attempt to look into the vijñanamaya kosha, but no attempt has been made yet to discover the pranayama kosha. In many respects, however, pranamaya kosha is the most important aspect of our lives. According to the yogic theory, the prana is manifesting in two forms: one as the dynamism of the physical body and the other as the vitality of the mind. The dynamism of the physical body is known as the *pingala* force, the solar force. The vitality of the mind is known as the *ida* force, the lunar force. The prana of the body and the prana of the mind are going in two different directions right now. With the practice of pranayama, we are able to awaken the potential of the vital energies in our physical system and in our mind.

Researchers and doctors have found pranayamas can become a very effective therapy for the management of mental, psychiatric and psychological problems. Pranayamas are very important practices of yoga and we should practise them for our own experience, and research them to replace the veil of secrecy with knowledge and understanding.

Let us incorporate asana, pranayama, relaxation – yoga nidra, and the two practices of concentration, *trataka* and *ajapa japa*, in our routine. We will develop the ability to manage each and every kind of stress possible in the world. We will develop an ability to maintain our health, and in the most adverse conditions that we encounter, we will have the strength to experience our own inner power. Yoga is a true friend in the most demanding situations the world can throw at you. That is application of yoga in our life.

Yoga and Mental Health

10 October 1995, DIPAS (Defence Institute of Physiology and Applied Sciences), Delhi

I feel that yoga has much to offer. Yoga acts on different levels: it provides physical health, mental wellbeing, emotional harmony and balance, intellectual creativity, psychic development and it also provides spiritual enlightenment. When we look at this wide structure of yoga, we have to decide how we are going to learn. Which aspect of yoga are we going to learn? In which aspect of yoga are we interested to incorporate into our practice, our lifestyle, our work, our profession? How can we incorporate the entire practice of yoga into the lifestyle of human society, which is in need of a direction? In society today there are misconceptions about yoga. I am not here to talk about these misconceptions; I am here to explain to you what physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, psychic and spiritual attainments one can gain through the practices of yoga. This will give you a better concept and better knowledge of the yogic performance.

Physical health

Initially, yoga gives physical health. Health is definitely an important subject in our life. I don't think there is anyone in this world who can claim to be totally healthy. There are imbalances, illnesses and diseases in different parts of the body, in different areas of the body, in different systems of the body, in different areas of our perception and mind. Total health is certainly lacking in our life. Yoga has said that imbalances are due to physiological, social, emotional and psychological problems and diseases.

In order to rectify these problems and provide total health to the body, let us begin with the body. In the spectrum of yoga, we have the practices of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and shatkarma. The original hatha yoga dealt only with the shatkarmas, which aim at detoxification and removal of impurities from the body. If we look to ayurveda and the concept of the three doshas: kapha, vata and pitta, then you will also know that an imbalance in kapha, vata or pitta can lead to ill health and physical disease. In this way, hatha yoga has been very closely linked with the system of ayurveda as it aims at purification of the body and the removal of toxins accumulated by the excess of pitta, kapha and vata. Therefore, you will notice that there are traditionally only six practices prescribed in hatha yoga.

Cleansing of the head region is through the practice of *neti*, cleaning of the nasal passage, and dhautis like *karna dhauti* and *jihva dhauti*, the cleaning of the ears and tongue.

Dhauti is generally known as a practice to clean the area from the throat, the oesophagus, the stomach, and even the small intestines through the use of water, air or cloth. Another shatkarma is *basti*, similar to the ancient enema, provides detoxification of the large intestines. Initially according to tradition, these are the three most important techniques to detoxify the physical body.

In order to enhance the immunity of the physical body, there is the practice of *nauli* which induces energy and vitality into each and every system: the sympathetic, parasympathetic, immune, cardiovascular and the respiratory systems. After purification, it infuses these various systems with vitality and dynamism.

Following the infusion of energy into the body, the practice of *kapalbhati* has been prescribed in order to harmonize the activities of the parallel nervous systems, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic, and the cerebral activity. After the practice of *kapalbhati*, in order to focus the energies that we have gained and developed, evolved and awakened in the physical body, comes the practice of *trataka*. This has been the traditional hatha yoga in order to provide total optimum health to the physical body.

Later on, after a couple of centuries, different thinkers who came onto the scene of yoga, different yogis who had experimented with various other practices of yoga, incorporated the practise of bandhas and mudras along with certain asanas and pranayamas, into the structure of hatha yoga. These yogis said that detoxification of the body is not enough to provide optimum health since the body is also controlled by energy and prana shakti.

According to the ancient Nadi Vijnana of India, the yogis discovered that there are 72,000 channels of pranic force or conductors of prana in our system. Eventually this Nadi Vijnana was, for whatever reason, suppressed in India; however, it continued to be developed in countries like China and Japan. Today, we find the system of nerve meridians through which the 'chi' energy flows described there, as well as techniques by which the energy can be guided and directed and blocks removed, known through the practices of acupuncture and acupressure. This concept of Nadi Vijnana is an Indian concept. It evolved in India and yogis still use this tradition of nadis; however not only yogis, as Ayurveda also uses the diagnostics through nadis.

Mental wellbeing

The second thing to give you a better picture of how yoga gives the practitioner optimum health, is that yoga provides mental wellbeing. The mind has been the primary field of research in yoga. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, you will find that the whole concept of yoga revolves around the mind. In the *Yoga Vasishtha*, you will find that the whole teaching of Vasishtha to Rama revolves around the management of the mind. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, you find that the teaching of Lord Krishna again revolves around changing the attitude and viewpoint of the mind. Therefore, the mind has always been the area which yogis have tried to investigate.

Yogis had always believed that the mind is the link between the manifest and the unmanifest dimension of human experience and our guru Paramahansa Swami Satyananda, has always said that yoga psychology begins where modern

psychology ends. If you consider the collection of experience gained in yoga psychology, which is thousands of years old, already applied and tested, you will find there is a big difference between modern psychology and yoga psychology.

Modern psychology is about 100 years old, from the time of Jung, Freud and other psychoanalysts, while yoga psychology is definitely much more ancient than that. The evidence of this is found in the *Yoga Sutras*, in *Yoga Vasishtha*, in the *Bhagavad Gita* and in practically all the ancient literatures of India which people ignore thinking that they are not modern, not scientific, but you are wrong if you think like that.

In yoga the mind has been defined as *vritti*, it is like the surface of a lake that is crystal clear and when you throw a stone into that lake, then from the point where the stone entered, the water ripples spread out. These ripples that spread out from the centre towards the shores are the *vrittis*. They don't remain confined to one area only. Anything that falls in the water sends out its ripples to all directions, towards all the shores of the lake. Similarly, in the management of mind we are not just dealing with the symptom manifesting at present, but with the effect of that particular experience on our subconscious and unconscious mind also.

This reminds me of some events which happened. I will just tell you the stories and let you come to your own conclusions. First, a four-year-old boy whose parents had gone to work was being looked after by a babysitter. He was forced to eat carrots, something which he hated. Now, to do something that he did not want to do, which he wanted to avoid totally, created a change in his mental structure, and later on he suffered from asthma.

Story number two. A young boy of nine went fishing in England with a tin of maggots and when he opened the tin, a swarm of flies came out of the tin and flew into his face. He went into a shock and suffered from claustrophobia later on in his life.

Story number three. A rickshaw puller in Munger suffers from an unknown disease: at night when he goes to sleep,

he begins to say things that nobody understands and which later on, turn out to be in the French language.

These three stories that I have told you, what do they mean? What do they represent? What is their relevance with the mind?

The boy who suffered from asthma became a doctor to discover how he could remove his asthma; medicines did not help him, yoga did. Sometime later he went through a Ventolin test and he was declared absolutely free from asthma. What happened? He says, “While I was meditating I had this vision of myself when I was a baby and saw what had happened to me, what I had tried to suppress. I realized that suppression had resulted later on in the form of asthma.”

The other boy who suffered from claustrophobia was practising meditation later in life and once he saw a vision during meditation. The flies were coming at him and the memory was triggered, that at a young age he had gone fishing with a tin of maggots which had turned into flies. From that day, his claustrophobia disappeared.

The rickshaw puller who had never even left the city of Munger, who at that time, had never even seen a white person in his life, how could he speak fluent French when he was asleep at night? He came for treatment to the ashram and one night while he was sleeping, a French person happened to pass his room and realized that he was speaking classical French. What was that? An impression in the mind, a *samskara*, a *karma*, an impression, a *smriti*? These events make us believe that *vrittis* are definitely important for the management of mind and to attain mental wellbeing.

Managing the vrittis

The *Yoga Sutras* (1:6) have defined *vrittis* in five forms:

1. *Pramana*: right, correct knowledge
2. *Viparyaya*: which is also *bhranti*, wrong knowledge
3. *Vikalpa*: conflict
4. *Smriti*: memory; not the memory which we carry in our life, not the working memory, not the symbolic memory, not the different forms of memory which psychology has

described, but the deeper form of memory; the genetic memory. That is the fourth vritti.

5. The fifth vritti is *nidra*, sleep; not the sleep that we experience every night in bed, but *nidra* meaning the disconnection of senses with the outer world where the mind is engulfed by its own presence; where the mind is not affected by the senses and the external stimuli.

In order to manage these vrittis, three techniques have been described about which you will find plenty of references in the ashtanga yoga of Patanjali:

1. Pratyahara
2. Dharana
3. Dhyana

Pratyahara means expansion of the senses, understanding of the sensory experiences, withdrawal of the senses, cessation of the sensory experiences. These are the four stages of *pratyahara*.

Dharana means concentration of mind, developing one-pointedness of mind, of attention, stopping the dissipation, the distraction of mental faculties and focusing them at one point where the mental faculties experience rest and experience unfoldment.

Dhyana means meditation; however, not in the sense that you understand it, but in the sense that yoga has actually meant it. *Dhyana* is to hold the unbroken and continuous experience of concentration.

These are the three practices which are beneficial for attainment of mental wellbeing.

Towards positive emotions

The third point is emotional harmony. Emotions are expressions of energy and energy is always pure. Emotions are raw energy manifestations which you can't guide through your intellect. Can you guide, can you control that emotional explosion of anger? No. Can you control or guide your hatred for something or somebody? No, it is an explosion. Emotions always manifest in the form of an explosion or in the form of an obsession: when it is an explosive emotional expression,

it goes out and when it is an obsessive emotional expression, it goes in.

The management of emotions is done through bhakti yoga, but not the concept of bhakti which you have at present. You think that bhakti is thinking of God, you think that bhakti leads one closer to God. Wrong. I am not talking of that bhakti; I am talking of bhakti plus yoga, where yoga is experienced in bhakti. And how is yoga experienced in bhakti?

Let us imagine that I have a crystal ball. If I place it on a white cloth, I see the white cloth reflected in the ball. If I place the crystal ball on top of a red cloth, I see the red colour reflected in the ball. If I place it on a black cloth, I see black; on a yellow cloth, yellow. Emotions are similar to that. If the emotions are attracted in the form of attachment or in the form of an obsession towards money, then their form, their nature would be of greed. If they are attracted towards a lover, then that emotion or energy will take the form of passion. If it is directed towards an elder, it will take the form of respect. If it is directed towards an adversary, it will take the form of animosity. If it is directed towards our children, it will take the form of love. If it is directed towards people for whom we feel affinity, it will take the form of compassion and affection. If the same emotion is channelled towards the discovery of the self, it will take the form of bhakti.

Bhakti is not *karmakanda*, or ritual, according to yoga. According to yoga, *bhakti* is the discovery of the self, as in the poem of William Blake which says: "To see infinity in a grain of sand". That is bhakti, to experience the entire cosmos in a grain of sand. That bhakti is the most effective method to manage emotional upheavals. Why? Emotional upheavals generally represent disturbed emotions and they lead to negative expressions in our life, but if we can change those emotions into positive ones, a beautiful growth of human life is seen.

Psychic development

The fourth aspect is that yoga assists in psychic development. What is psychic? What is psyche? You may have an interpre-

tation of psychic or the human psyche, while yoga has a different interpretation of the human psyche. Scientists today are thinking about four states of mind. They speak of the conscious mind, but we are not fully aware of all the areas that the conscious faculty can touch in our life. They talk about the subconscious, but beyond thoughts or emotions nothing more is known about *samskaras* or impressions and *smritis*. We talk of *smriti*, memory, as a cerebral activity; I am sure you must have read about the search for consciousness and the discovery of memory. They have talked about suppressed memories and all the different forms of memories: the working memory, the symbolic memory and so on.

Still, I feel that science is definitely missing a vital point. They are trying to give a physical nature to a subtle activity and sometimes I wonder whether it will ever be possible to do it. Eventually, science will have to recognize the subtle nature also and not compartmentalize everything as a cerebral, neurological cellular activity. There is definitely something beyond that.

The yogic concept of psyche has been very beautifully described in cryptic form in the *Mandukya Upanishad*. There we meet *vaishvanara* representing the conscious self, *tejas* representing the subconscious self, *prajna* representing the unconscious self, and *turiya* representing the effulgent superconscious self. I have used the word 'self' here, not 'state', not the conscious state. No, the conscious self because self is different to state, self is *purusha*, the totality of an experience, whereas state is only one aspect of an experience.

The yogic traditions have described the totality of the experience of conscious, subconscious, unconscious and beyond unconscious, where the ripples eventually reach. *Smriti* is not just physical, not just conscious, but it is also subconscious, it is also unconscious. *Smriti* is not only unconscious, but genetic. *Smriti* is not only genetic, but also spiritual. *Smriti* is not only spiritual, but karmic and *smriti* is not only karmic, but also *samskara smriti*. And it is not only *samskara*, but there is transcendental *smriti*.

Experience fullness in life

I'm trying to present the full picture of yoga in brief because yoga is a very big subject. We should see that these are the ripples, because an event which happens outside creates an impression in the mind field and that impression in the mind field extends its ripples into the unknown dimensions of the mind as well as the manifest dimensions of the mind.

When we deal with the manifest dimension we encounter anxiety, neurosis, insecurity, depression, phobias, complexes. We have to manage that, but we tend to manage them from a social viewpoint. Yoga advises us to manage them not only from the social viewpoint but also from an internal viewpoint, so that the energy disturbance which has happened inside in the realm of emotion can be harmonized.

This happens in part by the practice of karma yoga, not the karma yoga which you understand, but the karma yoga that yoga has defined and described in which the outlook and attitude towards life changes. I would like to give this example because I feel it is appropriate. This glass, show it to a pessimist, he will say it is half empty; show it to an optimist, he will say it is half full.

In relation to ourselves we are pessimists because we feel that there is emptiness inside, there is something missing from our life all the time, and we are trying to fulfil that emptiness by one method or another, by one means or another. That is known as the 'rat race' the 'worldly rat race', but when we change our viewpoint and attitude and look at the glass again, we say, "No, it's not half empty, it's half full." Then all the negative expressions of the worldly rat race change, they become positive, they become harmonious. So, instead of feeling anxiety, we feel contented. Instead of feeling anger and frustration, we feel joy. Instead of feeling depressed and suppressed, we become creative. Therefore, karma yoga is an important practice of yoga to manage emotional and psychic imbalances, because it changes the whole structure, the whole pattern of consciousness.

This can be further strengthened by the practices of kundalini yoga, by the understanding and awakening of

the chakras, the dormant potentials that exist within every human being. There is ample evidence in history, examples of people who have attained that level of awakening. That is the direction of human evolution anyway: towards *poornata*, towards perfection.

After psychic development, when we move to the fifth area, spiritual enlightenment, there is nothing but the experience of fullness in life. The aim is not the realization of God; realization of God is a symptom of the experience of fullness in the system of yoga.

Now, coming back to the basics after having described to you the process of yoga, it is up to you. Yoga can definitely be applied effectively and efficiently in our professions and in our homes, and our life can become full and complete.

Spirituality and Health

10 October 1995, Doctors Conference, AllMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), Delhi

It is a moment of joy and happiness and honour for me to be present here today with all of you and to share some thoughts on the subject of spirituality and yoga. But before I begin with this subject, I would like to tell you one story.

Once upon a time, there lived a young boy with his mother in a farmhouse, and there were many, many fruit trees, flowers, shrubs; it had a very beautiful garden. The mother used to look after the trees, that was her joy and happiness. One day, when she had to leave the farmhouse to go to a distant town for some work, she called her son and requested him to look after her prized trees while she was away for a period of about seven to ten days. The son assured her, “Yes mother, I will look after the plants and the trees that you cherish so much.” After receiving this assurance from her son, the mother left for her work.

She returned after about seven days and went to the garden to check on her plants and trees. After a while, when she came back to the house, she was in a state of depression, in a state of worry. She called her son and asked him, “My son, did you look after the trees and plants as you had assured me?” The son said, “Yes mother, I did.” The mother said, “Describe to me how you looked after them, because, to me, they don’t look healthy.” The son said, “Every morning, I would go out with a dusting cloth in my hand, remove the dust from each and every leaf, give them a nice shine, remove the dust and insects from the flowers and fruits, give them a nice shine;

I would smell the flowers and if I found flowers that had no smell I would spray some perfume on them so that they would give out a beautiful fragrance. I would check the bark of the trunk and branches of the tree, to make sure there were no insects. In this way, I tired myself day in and day out looking after your prized trees with the hope that when you come back, you would be happy.” The mother said, “Son, you have done a commendable job. But please tell me, did you ever water the plants and the trees?” The son said, “No mother, I forgot.”

Now this is a true story, and the lesson that the son got from his mother was that the trunk, the leaves, the fruits and the flowers are not so important. The most important part of a tree is not the trunk, but the root. One has to nurture the root more than any other part, for once the root becomes weak, what kind of life will the tree have? You may prop it up but with one small storm it will fall, as it lacks the strength to stand upright. From the time of our birth till the time of our death, we care for our trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit, but neglect our roots. Our body represents the trunk. The branches represent the different organs, karmendriyas and jnanendriyas of the body. The leaves, flowers and fruit represent the mind and the different experiences of the total mind. However, the roots are somewhere hidden and we have never looked deep inside to find them.

The roots are the spirit that is dormant within and unknown to us. As we have not looked after our spirit, we are weak physically, mentally, emotionally, psychically and spiritually. When the body becomes sick, we try to care for it because the body is the medium for experiencing the higher realities of life. When the mind becomes infirm, we try to heal it with the different therapies that are available. But we have neglected to care for the inner structure, the inner spirit. This has been the greatest folly of humankind and it is the reason why we have been unable to find enjoyment, contentment, happiness, health and our place in life. It is this state of total wellbeing that we have to aim for.

Wellbeing of the human personality

The wellbeing of the body, mind and emotions, the sense of ethics and morality, represents the concept of health, and not necessarily the absence of disease. According to tradition, once we become life members of this club of prakriti, we have to go through three experiences: *janma*, birth, *vyadhi*, disease, and *mṛityu*, death. Janma, or birth, is our admission into the club of prakriti. Once we become members of this club, it is natural that we will experience vyadhi, or disease.

The definition of disease is ‘disturbed ease’. The natural harmony of the self becomes disturbed due to the attractions of the senses and the world, due to the diversion of the mind from the inner self to an imposed outer identity. This creates an imbalance in the structure of the mind, body, psyche and emotions. Later, that imbalance is reflected in our behaviour, performance, thought processes, and mental and emotional expressions.

When we are happy and content, everything seems to go smoothly, but when we are unhappy, when we struggle to attain something which is lacking in our lives, then we tend to lose our equilibrium and clarity of mind. These are the things that both modern and ancient therapies try to treat. However, it is not the symptom but the cause of the disturbance that has to be treated. Some therapies can do this and others cannot. We need to realize that there are ways to regulate our lifestyle. Regulation of lifestyle is the keyword here for the wellbeing of the human personality.

Better servicing through yoga

We take care of the many mechanical things and electronic gadgets in our homes. When we purchase a new car, we are observant of the mileage it has run. After a certain number of kilometres, we have it serviced, as we know that if we look after the car, it will give us better service, it will have a long life; there will be less wear and tear. If we can apply this principle to those things that we cherish and wish to maintain, why don’t we apply the same principle to our body and mind?

How many times have we taken ourselves for servicing since we were born? When there is wear and tear in the body, we go to the doctor. The doctor looks inside and says, “Yes, the valves need to be replaced inside your heart.” Then we go into a state of shock and anxiety and begin to wonder, “What is going to happen to me? Will the replacement work or not? Will I become dependent on medication and a doctor for the rest of my life?” Why do we allow things to come to that stage? We allow it because we have kept our knowledge and understanding as a status symbol and not applied it in our own lives.

When something happens to the mind, we run to the specialist with anxiety, depression, tension, frustration, anger, neurosis. What can he do at that time except give us some support, help us relax and try to make us see the positive side of things, not the negative. All our lives, from birth to death, we go through this show of running from pillar to post, trying to find a sense of physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual wellbeing in life, but we do not find it anywhere. Regulation of lifestyle is the keyword for wellbeing, and the lifestyle can be regulated by applying the very simple and basic principles of yoga.

Dealing with old age and death

Old age is a natural process of physical and mental evolution. Old age represents the state of maturity of the body and mind. You can't stop the process of ageing and decaying, as it is another important attribute of this club of prakriti. You have to fulfil the journey from one end, which is birth, to the other end, which is death. People become neurotic in old age and begin to feel insecure: “What will happen to me? I can't eat properly, I can't walk properly, I need support, I need help.” This leads to further mental and physical deterioration which makes one weaker and more debilitated. It becomes a restricting factor in the expression of human creativity. The yogic tradition says that the third stage, ageing and death, can also be regulated by applying the four *purusharthas*, or efforts in life.

There are four human efforts that must be made during the course of life in order to experience completeness.

Traditionally, the purusharthas are described as: i) *artha*, financial fulfilment, ii) *kama*, emotional fulfilment, iii) *dharma*, social fulfilment and iv) *moksha*, spiritual fulfilment. These four purusharthas are not alien to us, rather, they are an integral part of our culture and lifestyle. It is the proper observance of these four efforts in life which leads to our ultimate wellbeing and spiritual understanding at the time of old age and death.

Tree of life

Spirituality is awareness of the root of the tree of life. This has been clearly stated in the 15th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* which is *Purushottam Yoga*, the yoga of the supreme spirit. Here it says (15:1): *Oordhvamoolamadhahshaakham* which means that life is like an inverted tree, with the roots above and the branches below. The roots represent the spirit. The trunk is the manifestation of the human nature, identity, personality and individuality. The branches, which are at the lower level, represent the many expressions of the gunas in human nature, in the form of knowledge, creativity, energy, feeling, attitude, positivity and negativity, which we express in our lives.

In the same chapter, it has also been said (15:3): *Asanga-shastrena dridhena chhitva*, which means that, ultimately, we have to cut the trunk of the tree, so that the physical and mental experiences are isolated from the spiritual experiences. There are different *astras*, or divine weapons, such as the Brahmastra, Agneyastra, Vayavyastra. Here, Lord Krishna has defined another form of astra to cut the trunk at the root. The instrument is *anasakti*, the axe of detachment. Those things we cannot leave are *asakti*, or attachments. When we hold the axe of detachment in our hands, we can cut this tree of life at the root. Then we are free from attachment to the physical and material life and can experience spiritual life. This is *viveka* and *vairagya*, discrimination and non-attachment.

Four wheels of life

In this manner, the four purusharthas: *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha*, are experienced. Every member of the club of prakriti has to follow the code of conduct, which has four

rules. However, many people want to be exempt from some of these rules. So, they say, “I can’t follow all four; I will follow only two.” People who are involved in life only follow artha and kama, and those who have renounced the world follow dharma and moksha. However, the car moves on four wheels. If two are punctured, we cannot go forward. Even if there is just one puncture, it must be fixed. Yet we try to keep moving on just two wheels throughout our life. This is the reason we have so many breakdowns and the driver has broken bones due to the jerking and bumping of the car.

Application of artha and kama

The meaning of artha is absolute security, which is not based on selfish desire and ambition, but on a sense of fulfilment, contentment and attainment. Artha means *sampannataa* or prosperity. We can be *sampanna*, well-off, without money also. Money is not an indication of total wellbeing. It is only a means of exchange which is needed to survive in the world today. The sense of wellbeing and security has to emanate from the mind, from the inner nature. Satisfaction, or *prasannataa*, has to be felt inside on all levels. This security is physical, social and financial, in the family, personal and cosmic life.

The meaning of kama is different to most people’s understanding. People generally relate kama to the senses, the sensorial life, but it goes deeper than that. Kama is the seed, the motivating factor in life, the impulse behind every action. It is *kamana*, desire; it is ambition, the force that guides one to attain something in life. This also has to be managed and regulated properly, because the negative aspect of kama is definitely degrading, and the positive aspect is an uplifting state of being and experience.

Dharma and moksha

Dharma means commitment to duty, not only professional, social and personal, but also universal. These are the duties that can truly be followed. It also refers to the means or way of thought by which one can develop it. Dharma does not mean religion or following some form of religious precept.

Dharma is a process by which one can ultimately experience the state of transcendence, and for this, commitment, awareness and pursuit of duty towards oneself, one's family, one's society, one's nation, one's world and one's universe has to be recognized.

What good is commitment to ourselves? What use is the life we lead? We do service, raise children and then die. This is the routine of life. There is more to life than this, but we are unable to experience it, because we forget that the main purpose of performing action is *kartavya*, duty. Therefore, we deviate from the path of dharma, and this is a purushartha which we all have to do in order to experience a meaningful and fulfilling life.

The last purushartha is moksha which means enlightenment, but enlightenment is not an effort. It is classified as a purushartha to make us aware that it is a stage to be reached in the course of our life. In reality, it is a state of attainment which is gained after following and fulfilling the first three purusharthas. God-realization is not the aim of human life, and it is not necessary to make an effort to experience God in our lives. God-realization is the result of having attained fulfilment in life.

When the stomach is full, satisfaction is gained and the aim is attained. Satisfaction is an indication that we have eaten well. The actual effort is in eating, not in satisfying the hunger. In the same way, the effort here is to attain fulfilment, completeness and wholeness in life, and the result of that attainment is God-realization. Therefore, it is a natural process, a natural experience, which is bound to happen regardless of whether we wish it or not. This is confirmed by the Shanti Mantra in the fortieth Samhita of *Rig Veda*:

Om poornamadah, poornamidam, poornaat, poornamudachyate, poornasya, poornamaadaaya, poornameva vashishyate.

Fullness comes from fullness. If you remove the full from the full, only fullness remains.

This is further clarified in the *Ishavasya Upanishad* by the following mantra:

*Om ishaa vaasyamidagvam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat.
Tena tyaktena bhunjeethaamaa gridhah kasyasvid dhanam.*

This means that the entire universe, the visible cosmos, is the seat of divinity. At the same time there are also *bhogas*, things to enjoy. So enjoy them while they are there, but do not lose track of divinity in that enjoyment. This is the realization of moksha, which philosophers have called the realization of *advaita*, non-difference between Self and Brahman.

Yogic view of spirituality

The combination of the four purusharthas is spirituality. Spirituality does not require us to isolate ourselves from society, to close our eyes, concentrate, meditate and try to have different divine experiences. Yoga teaches us spirituality, not by running away from life, but by running into life with total awareness, total conviction, total faith, total belief in the completeness and the fullness that 'I am'.

In order to change our view of spirituality, we will have to differentiate between spirituality and religion, between the practical experiences we can have of spirituality and of religion. Science is a global concept. Science remains the same whether it is taught in English, Hindi, Chinese or Japanese. Physics, chemistry and mathematics are the same whether in the East or the West. Religion, on the other hand, is a social concept. Every *jati*, or caste, has its own line of thought; every *sampradaya*, or sect, has its own line of thought; every culture has its own line of thought.

Therefore, religion is a social concept; it can change from society to society. However, spirituality is not a social concept; it is an individual concept. At the same time, it is a universal concept, because spirituality takes birth and unfolds from within, and it unites us with the universe by providing a sense of total fulfilment, and the experience of the effulgent personality. Yoga has always aimed for this.

Complete personality

How does the yogic process relate to health and spirituality? There are many misconceptions about yoga. Some people think it relates only to the physical body, others think it is only meditation, while others think that it is a way of managing stress. However, yoga has definite and specific roles for each condition and stage of life. Yoga maintains the health of the body, wellbeing of the mind and harmony of the emotions. Ultimately, yoga culminates in the awakening of the human psyche and realization of the human spirit.

If we remove the word 'yoga', we will also see that these are the things we need in our lives. The body requires health, the mind requires wellbeing, the emotions need to be harmonized, the psyche needs to be awakened and the spirit needs to be realized. This is the complete human personality. In the Bible it is said that man does not live by bread alone. This means that instead of seeing just one aspect of ourselves, we have to develop a holistic view. Only then can we claim to be true human beings.

Physical health

When we consider our needs, we also have to see where the imbalances in our lifestyle lie. These imbalances create disturbances in the harmonious structure of the body, thus giving birth to illness and disease. Asana, pranayama, shatkarma, mudra and bandha provide health to the physical body by removing the blockages, toxins and different imbalances which occur in the internal systems. Yoga is a spiritual science, but it also works as a therapy, so people accept it in that form.

Mental wellbeing

In order to experience mental wellbeing, being without stress, tension, anxiety, frustration and depression, yoga provides the methods of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Yoga says that the faculties and energies of the mind are dissipated at present like four wild horses running in all directions. If one cannot stop the mind or emotions, or control negative

thoughts, how can one achieve a spiritual state? There is jealousy, anger, pride, and when sitting for meditation, one thinks, “I am going to have darshan of God.”

This is a futile hope. Until mental wellbeing is attained through the techniques of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana, we will not be able to control the other manifestations of our personality. The techniques of pratyahara aim, firstly, to relax the stress and tension we have created internally. The second stage is recognition of the different sensorial and psychological experiences which are happening within. After that, concentration is developed by gaining the ability to focus at one point without a struggle. Then comes dhyana, which is continuing the experience of concentration for an extended period of time. Mental wellbeing can be attained by following this process.

Emotional harmony

Emotion represents the raw expression of conscious energy in the human personality and it cannot be intellectually controlled. It is an explosion. Hatred and frustration cannot be controlled through the intellect. They are explosions and we become obsessed by them. Yoga teaches us to manage and harmonize the emotions by the practice of bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is considered to be devotional yoga, but that is a concept we have developed. In reality, bhakti yoga is the method which regulates, diverts, channels and gives a direction to the forces of our emotions.

If a crystal is placed on a red cloth, it will reflect the colour red; if it is placed on a black cloth, it will reflect the colour black, and if it is placed on a blue cloth, it will reflect the colour blue. In exactly the same way, emotions are colourless in themselves, but they are coloured by different situations, circumstances and events. They are coloured when we are attracted or become attached to something which grabs our attention. Then our emotions reflect according to the colour of the mind.

If I recognize you as a friend, my emotion will be that of friendship. If I recognize you as my adversary, the emotion

will take the form of animosity. If I recognize you as my elder or peer, my emotion will take the form of respect. If I think of you as my lover, my emotion will take the form of passion. If I recognize you as my son, my emotion will take the form of affection. If my mind runs after money, my emotion will take the form of greed. If I look at you as my competitor, my emotion will take the form of jealousy. However, if I can divert this emotion in a positive direction, not towards the world but towards the Self or God, it takes the form of bhakti.

How to channel the emotions is explained very beautifully in bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is a training whereas bhakti is a state of experience. In bhakti yoga we have to train ourselves to divert the emotions. Once the emotions are diverted, we experience bhakti. The training given is the channelling of all emotions towards the experience of our inner nature. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, this is called *nishkama bhava*. In other literature it is called *sakaratmic bhava* or *sattwic bhava*.

Psychic awakening

The fourth stage of developing the human personality is psychic unfoldment, as our nature has the potential to experience both the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible. However, we tend to be more in awe of the manifest. We do not know how to accept the unmanifest for we have no concept of it. Psychic development is going through the various states of consciousness, recognizing their weaknesses and strengthening their faculties. This is possible through the practices of kriya and kundalini yoga.

Consciousness is the factor which controls our expressions in life. The *Mandukya Upanishad* has described the different stages of consciousness in a beautiful way. Modern psychology describes consciousness as a state, and the different levels of consciousness as the conscious, subconscious and unconscious states. The yogic tradition, on the other hand, describes the various levels of consciousness, not as states, but as the totality of experience of the self: the conscious self, the subconscious self, the unconscious self and, beyond that, the superconscious self.

I am not talking about jagrat, swapna, nidra or turiya avastha (the word *avastha* meaning state in relation to the human mind), but about human consciousness. There is a difference between mind and consciousness. Mind relates to the realm of prakriti. Consciousness relates, not only to the realm of prakriti, but also to the realm of divinity. Therefore, we have to look at these states in relation to consciousness in the form of the totality of an experience which is known as the self.

In the *Mandukya Upanishad*, it is said that consciousness or the conscious self is *vaishvanara*, the subconscious self is *tejas* and the unconscious self is *prajna*. It has described the condition, the power and the experience that one can have at each level. In brief, the psychic potential of every human being is limitless and this potential exists at different levels of consciousness.

Non-attachment – anasakta bhava

One more thing remains to be explained, which is *asanga bhavana* or detachment. There is a passage in the *Yoga Sutras* which states (2:7–8): *Sukhaanushayi raagaha*, we are attracted towards the things that give us pleasure; *Dukhaanushayi dweshaha*, we are repulsed by the things that give us suffering. Attraction is known as *raga*, attachment, or *asakti*. Repulsion is known as *dwesha* or *anasakti*. These two are opposing concepts. Attachment means we are stuck to something, and detachment means that surgery is performed in order to remove that.

Anasakta bhava is not detachment, for it has the faculty of discrimination. Once we have the ability to discriminate, then non-attachment arises. Non-attachment means we have everything, but we are not attached to it. Detachment means that we make an effort to cut ourselves off. In anasakta bhava, we are not making an effort to cut ourselves off, because we have *viveka*, the faculty of discrimination. So anasakta bhava is actually non-attachment rather than detachment.

There are many examples in history of anasakta bhava and anasakta yogis who lived in the world and, at the same time, were non-attached. King Janaka ruled a large empire

and yet was totally non-attached to it. He fulfilled his duties, role and obligations as a king, but at the same time, he was always in a state of internal harmony and peace.

Spiritual enlightenment

The expression of spiritual awakening manifests in the form of genius. It is experienced as a total change in viewpoint and ability to act in life. Interactions, behaviour and attitudes change as the vision becomes more universal. Spiritual enlightenment, the last stage of yoga, is the outcome of having attained physical health, mental wellbeing, emotional harmony and psychic awakening. It is the result of these attainments, and that is how we can look into or look towards our roots.

Spiritual enlightenment is the totality of experience, fulfilment and knowledge, which can only be attained by developing all the aspects of our personality. In order to experience spirituality, we must live a complete life and attain total health in all aspects of our personality. In order to attain total health and development of our personality, we must bring yoga into our lives.

Stress Management Through Yoga

December 1995, Bengaluru

This is my second opportunity to be with all of you in this place, and it gives me great pleasure to tell you about yoga. The theme for today is stress management through yoga. Before we go into that, let us first find out what yoga actually is, because there are different concepts and there are different ideas as to the meaning of yoga. Some people believe it to be physical postures known as *asanas*. Some people believe it to be breathing techniques known as *pranayama*. Some people believe it to be meditation known as *dhyana* and some people believe it to be a spiritual science known as *adhyatma vidya*. In this way, we all have our own understanding of the method and the approach and the philosophy of yoga; however, we have to begin with understanding what yoga has to offer to society at large before we come to the theme of today.

Instead of defining yoga in a traditional way, I would like to define yoga in a practical way, in terms of the work and the research that has been conducted in different parts of the world in relation to yoga, so that you will be in a better position to understand the meaning and application of yoga in our daily life. As you have been told, I come from the Bihar School of Yoga, which is the institution founded by Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati, my guru, and it is the head office of the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. This is a worldwide organization which aims at propagating yoga and conducting research into the different aspects of yoga. Recently we have started bringing yoga into society in a more

acceptable way by integrating the practices of yoga with the allopathic form of treatment. The government of Bihar has made it compulsory for yoga therapy training to be imparted in all the medical institutions, universities and colleges, so that the doctors in training will have a better understanding of the therapeutic principles of yoga and they will be able to apply them in their treatment of patients. As a result of this project, recommendations were sent to the Indian Medical Council by different professionals and doctors. The Indian Medical Council has accepted from this year, yoga as a subject which will be taught in the MBBS course. So this shows an acceptance of yoga in the therapeutic circle.

This is not the first result, rather it is the outcome of much research that has been conducted in India as well as in different parts of the world on the management of different psychosomatic illnesses using the practices of yoga. Professionals, doctors, and others are realizing that the modern methods of treatment are not a complete method; they simply look at symptoms and medicines are given to overcome those symptoms. Although we may suffer from different forms of illnesses and diseases such as asthma, diabetes, even cancer and AIDS, through medication we are only treating the symptoms which are at present manifesting in our body. We are not able to treat the cause of the disease; we are not able to understand why the disease has been caused in our body.

Now this is where yoga comes in. Yoga does not treat a symptom, it treats the person and the personality that are suffering. We have had very big successes in the management of asthma, diabetes, cancer, and at present our centres in the UK are conducting teaching programs for AIDS patients, HIV positive patients. We have found that simple practices of yoga can help even those people. So there is a very big scope for yoga in therapy. As I have mentioned before, we do not look at symptoms, instead we aim to rectify the imbalance which is created within the body due to stress in our life, due to habits in our life, due to our dietary habits, due to environmental factors that surround us and which we have to cope and live

with. Once we are able to manage and rectify those imbalances we regain health, and this is the concept of yoga therapy. Now with the acceptance of yoga in the medical system, there are greater possibilities of obtaining better health.

Another work that is being done is teaching yoga in prisons to help reform the character and the mentality of the criminals. Last month, a very ambitious project started in India. Swamis of the ashram are going to different prisons, living with the prisoners for a period of ten days, fifteen days, and teaching them different practices of yoga. This of course happened by the request of the government. In order to reform the agitated, disturbed, dissipated, criminal mentality, the government had to resort to yoga because they felt, which we already knew, yoga provides an opportunity to practise introspection, to look and to discover what is actually happening in our own mind, in our emotions, in our thoughts, in our feelings, in our own behaviour. We balance out discrepancies within our personality, within our nature. So this is another aspect of yoga.

The third application of yoga where we have been involved is in the Indian Army. Army men have to go through very rigorous conditions and training, especially when they are deployed in different regions of the country. They suffer mental crises, they undergo mental trauma especially in higher altitude areas of the Himalayan regions and in the desert areas. Now when these soldiers, say for example, are in high altitude areas, they are totally cut off from their family and society, they are totally cut off from the rest of the world and they do not see anything but a white sheet of snow for months. Psychologists have said that this imposed isolation creates emotional and mental disturbances in them. So we started teaching yoga in the army at Siachen glacier, and at the altitude of 22,000 feet, it is the highest battlefield in the world. Swamis have also given training in Ladhak and in the desert of Rajasthan. They found that those soldiers who are able to maintain their stability of mind, their concentration and overcome irritations, anxiety and fears, are able to pass their time in a better way.

The fourth project that we have undertaken is the establishment of the first yoga university in the world. This yoga university provides master's degree courses in six subjects: i) Yoga Philosophy which aims to research the ancient texts, scriptures and traditions, ii) Yoga Psychology which aims to see how yoga can work on the human mind, human nature and human behaviour, iii) Applied Yoga which aims to see how different yoga practices can be observed scientifically to create changes in the body and help in times of distress, disease, and ailments, iv) Department of Languages, v) Indological Studies such as Samkhya, Vedanta, Tantra and the other traditional philosophies that have existed such as Buddhism, Jainism, and eventually this will be growing into studies of international cultures, and vi) Department of Ecological and Environmental Science. These are the six departments or subjects which will be covered in the yoga university from post-graduate level onwards through masters, right up to doctorate degrees. The university begins to function from September, this year.

I am telling you what yoga has to offer in terms of managing human life because from my understanding and from what I have seen, there is a very big gap between the spiritual understanding of people and their material existence. When we have to think in terms of materialism, then we think in terms of money, comfort, status, luxury, and so on. When we are thinking in terms of status, name, fame, money, comfort or luxury, what are we doing to ourselves? Believe it or not, we are destroying our personality. Psychologists are coming to this conclusion; they have already broken new ground to discover this.

Every psychologist, every psychiatrist, every doctor now talks about stress syndromes. Things that happen because of stress in our life. Stress is considered to be something very bad. They say that stress can elevate blood pressure, reduce creativity of the human mind, create emotional imbalances and is the root cause of many physical diseases. Stress is also the cause of many psychological, emotional and mental diseases. So there is already a recognition of the stress factor in

our life. Unfortunately, nobody has actually understood what stress is and how it can destroy one's life. Stress can also build one's life because there are two aspects of tension, of stress. What is the definition of stress? It is movement from a state of rest, a state of repose, a state of inactivity, to a state of action, a state of activity, a state of dynamism, a state of movement. When you are absolutely relaxed, you are not in stress; when you are physically relaxed, the physical body is not stressed. The physical body will come into stress only after an action, a movement or a dynamic activity has taken place. Prior to such movements, such activity, such dynamism, the body is not experiencing stress. Mind will be at rest, emotions are at rest; they are not under stress until some form of thought, some form of desire, some form of mental or emotional activity begins in the mind. This happens in the form of either anxiety, worry, or irritation.

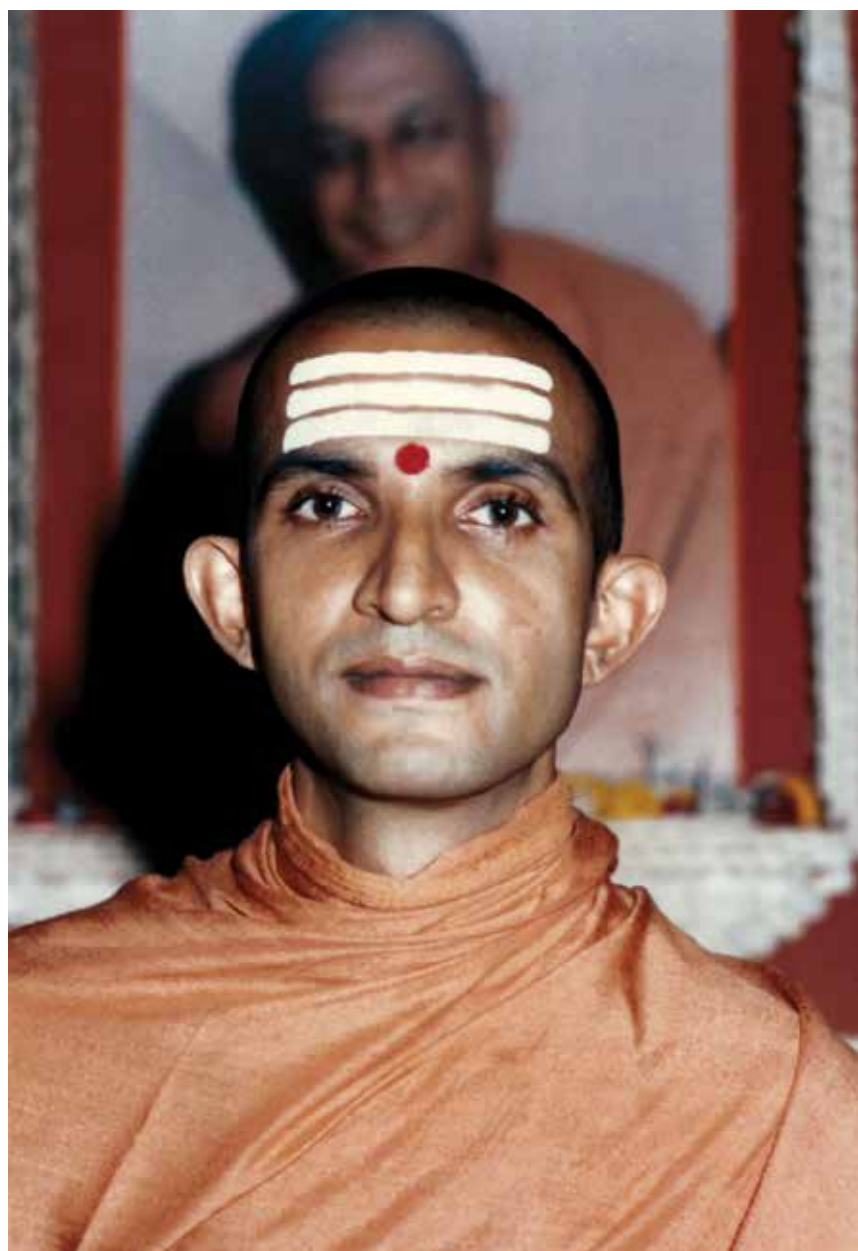
So stress simply represents a movement of a state or a condition of body and mind, a condition which takes one from relaxation into dynamism. As we move from relaxation into dynamism we can move in a controlled way or in an uncontrolled way. When we perform activity with awareness, with greater perfection, with greater knowledge in a controlled way, the stress is always contained. Stress becomes a force, but when we lose our awareness, when we lose our contact with clarity of mind and the state of relaxation which pervades body and mind, then stress become uncontrolled. Then it begins to affect the body, the mind, the thinking process, the rational process, the emotional process and even the intuitive process.

When we are in a rush to fulfil our aspirations in life in terms of materialism, then we neglect our body, we neglect our mind, and this is where problems begin. Civilization and humanity in the past has always worked at it. It is not that we are working for the first time in the history of humanity to attain success. Humanity has always made an effort to achieve the pinnacle of success but at different times it has adopted different approaches and different concepts to guide that effort. What approach or concept have we adopted in our life

to enhance, to increase our own creativity, to enhance and increase our own awareness? We might be intellectually well off, brilliant people, sharp brain, sharp intellect. We might be at the top of the social ladder. We might have everything that we desire in life, but have we the knowledge, have we the ability to manage our own life in a systematic way? That is a question for you to think about. There is no need for me to answer. Are we managing our life, our body, our habits, our behaviour, our emotions in a balanced and creative, positive way? When we are not able to manage in a positive way then stress which is the basis of our effort, becomes distress.

Stress is the balance, stress is dynamism, stress is activity, but uncontrolled stress is distress. Distress is physical, it is mental, it is emotional, it is social. When it is physical then pain is one symptom of distress in the body. Malfunction of the internal organs, the lungs, the heart, the digestive system, the kidneys, malfunction of these organs is another symptom of distress, or we can say negative stress. Some people suffer from gas, from constipation or from loose motions, from respiratory problems, or cardiovascular problems. These are physical, what we call diseases, what we call imbalances, the physical states of distress. Mental anxiety, fear, insecurity, irritation, anger, these are states of mental distress. Emotional distress, and even spiritual distress also exist.

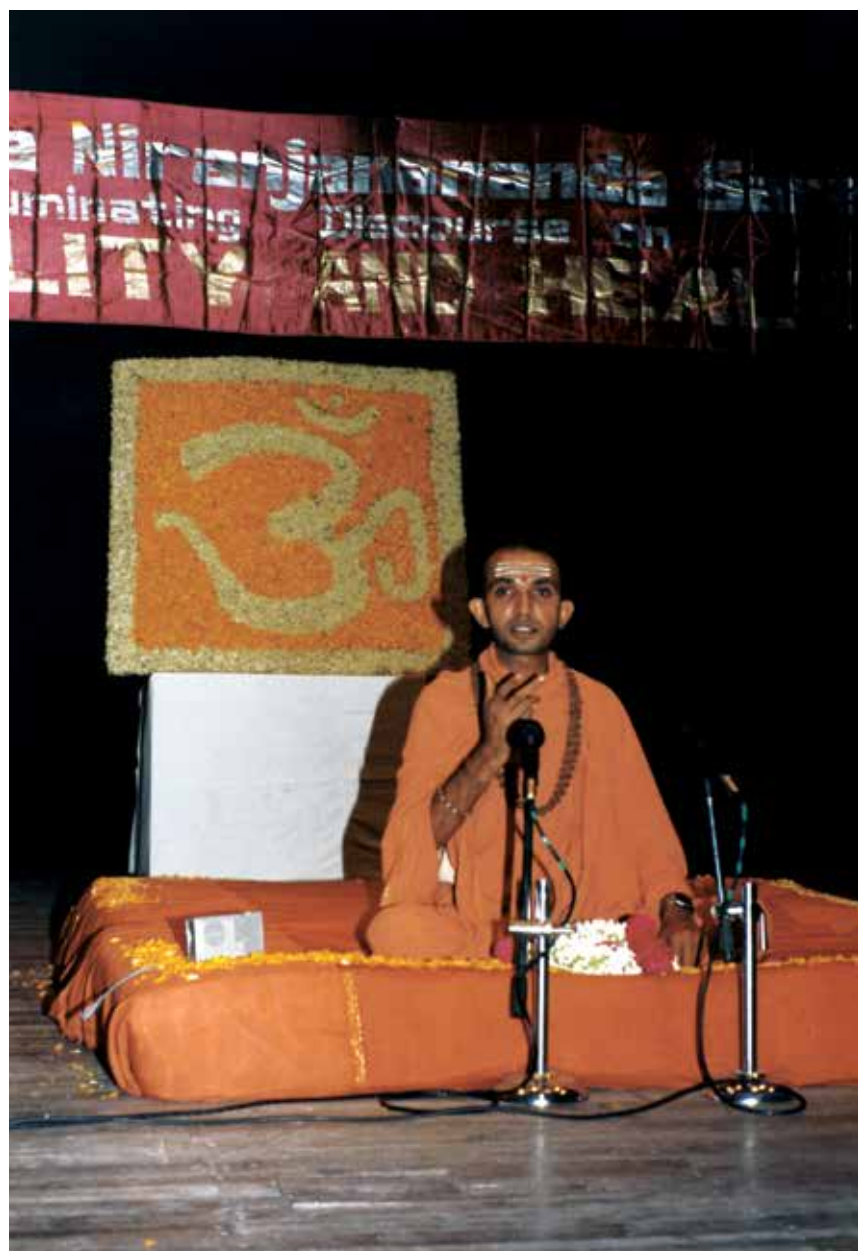
So what we are looking at in our life is a broad range of distress and this has been looked at or thought about in the subject of yoga. Yoga calls distress *kleshas*, meaning areas of life, conditions of life, states in life, where we experience suffering. In some literatures it has also been called *visha*, meaning where we are poisoning our life, removing the harmony from our life, removing balance from our life. So yogis came up with the system of managing stress in the body, in the personality and in our nature by recognizing stressors: conditions which create stress in ourselves. We shall look at these two, one after the other, because stress and the conditions of stress, are related with the body. The recognition of stressors in life is related with the entire habit and pattern of living.

















Stress that we suffer in the body is managed with the help of postures, asanas. Now some people have joint pain in the form of arthritis, in the form of rheumatism, in the form of gout. These joint pains, and later on in the course of life, lower back pains, spondylitis, headaches, that which we call diseases or illnesses, are actually negative stress affecting the body, distress. These are managed with the help of asanas, postures, so that any blockage of energy, any blockage of free movement in the body can be easily removed.

If you look at your physical posture during the day, what do you find? That during the day we're always in a bent position; we are never straight. From the time we wake up till the time we go to sleep we are always in a bent posture. A major activity of the body is sitting, whether we sit in our home, in the office, in a car, in a train, in a bus, in a plane or on the floor. Our body is bent and there is lot of pressure on the lower back. When we read, when we write, when we perform some activity, our head is bent forward; it is also bent. So there are two main areas of stress in the body: the lower back and the thoracic region. Those people who do a lot of desk work generally feel that gradually their shoulders and necks become stiff, the beginning of spondylitis. Those people who do a lot of sitting work feel pain in the lower back region, the posture is defective. If we do not manage them properly then this suffering here, this pain here, this stress accumulation here will become spondylitis; however, if we are able to, by being aware of what we are doing to ourselves, correct the posture, then there is no question of spondylitis. So asanas are there to help us manage levels of distress in the physiological system.

That is the whole concept of asana practise, according to Patanjali. Patanjali defines asanas as 'sthiram sukham asanam'. *Sthiram* means stability; *sukham* means comfort; *asanam* means postures. When Patanjali defines asana as a posture in which you are steady and comfortable, he is not describing or giving you the idea to sit quietly for an extended period of time, he is simply describing the state of body which you attain after giving mobility, flexibility and energy to each and every part

of the body. Therefore, you will find that there are two types of asanas. The first are the dynamic ones and second are the passive ones. People say that Patanjali means in his description of asanas, the meditative postures such as sukhasana or padmasana but it is not so. Here Patanjali is referring to a state of being which is absolutely free from every kind of pain, every kind of ache, every kind of stiffness, every kind of discomfort, whether they are in the muscular system, in the bone structure, in the nervous system, or in the internal organs. Optimal functioning of the body, the stress-free condition of the body, has been referred to in the description of asanas.

Another area of stress is the mind. Let us look at the mind in different ways. First, intellectual stress. Mathematicians can experience this. They are working with numbers and figures and are calculating all the time. Such people experience what is known as intellectual stress. Because the mind is continuously active, and it loses the concept of free thinking, it forms a pattern of linear thinking; two and two equals four, four and two equals six. It is that linear thinking which is very logical and very precise that creates intellectual tension. Scientists, physicists, mathematicians tend to overload their brain functions with very strong and hard linear thinking activity. Even when we are in our working environment, if we have pressure to finish off a job within a stipulated time and we are in hurry to finish it, then we are not willing to listen to anything. We are focused and concentrated on finishing the work and all our attention, all our concentration, all our energy is directed to that activity. After that, as we finish the work, there is a sudden drop of attention, there is a sudden drop in concentration and we feel tired. While we were busy there was no sense of tiredness but when we stopped, there was a sense of tiredness. That is intellectual, emotional. Children have to be admitted to a school, but the pay check has not yet been received to pay their admission fees and that thought is constantly in the back of the parents' mind – it is worrying, it is worrying, it is worrying. No matter what they are doing, they are feeling anxiety, deep anxiety within. How am I going to do it? That is emotional stress. There is also social stress.

Yoga says that you can manage the mental stress, the emotional stress, the social stress through meditative practices. These meditative practices are a must for everyone. Please remember that meditation does not make you spiritual; it is a different subject, but I am just giving you a hint. The aim of meditation is not to make you spiritual, and there is a difference between being spiritual and being religious. We go to temples, we go to churches, we go to mosques, we go to other places of worship. That is our religious nature, it is not our spiritual nature. Our spiritual nature is something different. Our spiritual nature represents a state of absolute inner creativity, absolute inner harmony, where we are in tune with the nature of spirit and we flow according to that nature. Meditation is a process which helps us to balance our mental, emotional, and psychic structures of personality. Yoga has described the process of meditation in three stages: as *pratyahara*, as *dharana*, and as *dhyana*.

Pratyahara is the first stage where we observe the activities of intellect, *buddhi*; the activity of the thinking aspect of our mind, *manas*; the activity of our logic, *chitta*; and the activity of our ego, *ahamkara*. You are familiar with the concept of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*. These are the four aspects of mind as defined by the Samkhya system and the yoga system which relate to material life. *Buddhi* is applied in material life, in our manifest life; *manas* is applied in our manifest life; *ahamkara* is applied in our manifest life; *chitta* is applied in our manifest life. The incorrect application of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara* causes suffering from mental, emotional, and psychic stress.

Buddhi stress is intellectual, *manas* stress is emotional, *chitta* and *ahamkara* stress is social. So the first aspect of meditation, *pratyahara*, ends with becoming aware of what is actually happening in these four regions of mind and relaxing that hyperactivity. One example, when we go to sleep at night, when we go to bed at night to sleep, what is the state of our mind then? You will notice that when you go to sleep at night, before you actually fall asleep you will be thinking of everything that has happened to you under the sun. All

your worries, all your problems, all your anxiety, all your relationships will flash before you and you will think about them, and thinking about them you will fall asleep. So where is relaxation in that? Although you may stop thinking about them consciously while you are asleep, your subconscious and your unconscious minds are continuously wondering over the problems.

There is never any inner relaxation. Why can't you say to yourself when you go to bed, 'I am going to sleep, I am not going to think about any problem'? And just become observant as to what is happening in your body, move your mind through your body, relax each and every part of the body, observe your breath flowing in and out, go deep into the state of relaxation. This is the practice of yoga nidra. People think that yoga nidra is a yogic practice and therefore it has to be done differently, but no it doesn't have to be done differently. It can be done, it has to be done and it should be done while you are preparing to sleep, because it is a technique of pratyahara and in this technique of pratyahara we are disconnecting the mind from the body, we are disconnecting the activity of the conscious mind with the activity of the subconscious. In that way deeper relaxation is achieved.

Of course in pratyahara we also develop awareness of our lifestyle, what we are doing, how we are performing, how we are acting, how we are behaving. A recognition has to take place. Without such recognition you cannot hope to make your life stress-free. Just as you can't drive a car without learning how to drive, without the knowledge that this is the gear, this is the brake, this is the accelerator, this is the clutch, this is the steering wheel; these are the indications. You can't drive a car like that. You have to become adept in driving the car in order to be a good driver. In the same way, in order to manage your life you have to train yourself, you have to educate yourself. You can't say, 'This is my body.' You don't know even what your body is like or how to manage a pain in the body when it happens. You can't say, 'This is my mind.' We don't even know what our mind is like, or how it behaves in different situations. We cannot control our anger, we can't

control our anxiety, we can't control our frustrations, so how can we say we know what our mind is like?

Pratyahara provides us with the opportunity to disconnect the connections that exist between the body and mind, between the subconscious mind and the unconscious mind and thus gain a greater understanding of how we perform in life. These are the two basic principles of stress management – asanas and pratyahara which are all simple enough to be done by everyone, nothing complicated. It is time that you find yourself a good teacher who can teach you the principles of postures, asanas, and the principle of relaxation and concentration, pratyahara. In this way you ultimately will be the winner; you will be the one with the ability to manage your life in a better way. This is what yoga aims at and this is what we are attempting to do through the propagation of yoga. So find an opportunity, a time to practise it.

Interview with Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

24 December 1995, Bangalore

Please clarify the aim of spiritual life and explain what you mean by saying one can attain transcendence by being serious. What is meant by serious?

Determination, conviction, faith and continuity, because there are many people who break after some time. They are not able to continue. There are many people who feel that they are unable to get finer experiences as, due to purification, lower experiences tend to surface in the mind and people get disturbed by it, “Yesterday I was having a divine experience and today I’m suddenly seeing the devil in my meditation. Am I doing something right? What have I done wrong?” Therefore, faith and conviction together with continuity is important. These are the symptoms of a serious aspirant.

You also talked about yoga being only about experiencing samadhi or having an encounter with God. You mentioned something which in effect, meant bringing it down into your life. Could you please explain what you mean by this?

God experience is something which, when one attains, one cannot remain the same person. There is bound to be a deep, deep, deep inner transformation. And another thing about God experience is that there has to be a reduction of desires. In many of the spiritual aspirants and sadhakas, we find that when they have even a transitory experience of something transcendental, along with that the ego also blows up and you know, it is a very fine thing and I am not denouncing it, but

at the same time there has to be the basic awareness that, ‘I am just a tool’.

There is a story: somebody asked Krishna, “Why do you like the flute so much?” Krishna said, “I like it because it is hollow. Any tune can be played upon it.” I was referring to this idea when I stated that samadhi is not the aim, rather it is letting go of the internal samskaras, karmas, desires and ambitions that we all hold so tightly because of our own insecurities and fears.

Then would you say that perhaps the experience we have – the limited transcendental experience – gives us the perspective or the means to be able to transcend samskaras?

Yes. Then you have to be persistent with it.

It’s interesting because spiritual experiences don’t seem to be difficult to have, but people don’t necessarily change in a radical way because of their experience. The interesting thing is why some people do change and some don’t.

No, just as we mature in our academic life, there is a process of maturity in spiritual life, too. There are many things which we were unable to understand as a child which we understand better now, because the level of understanding was not mature. In spiritually also, there has to be a sense of maturity and the experiences which we may have in the process of our sadhana should give us that indication. The experiences I have had is due to certain maturity of myself and to build that up, to develop that and not fall back in the traps again.

It seems that people can have quite a deep experience without necessarily being mature.

But that means the basic fundamental structure of their life is ready for the change.

No, but I mean the people you mentioned whose ego then blows up.

This is where the aim of sadhana should be considered. Are we simply going to satisfy ourselves with a very temporary,

momentary state of euphoria of inner freedom, of inner joy, of inner happiness, or can we make it permanent while leading a normal life. And if it can be made permanent while leading a normal life, then definitely an effort should be made to that end so that we can experience harmony and balance in our life.

Could you say something about your own path, about your own spiritual search or practices. Could you share something about that?

It has to be very basic because I feel I am unable to understand many of the high precepts whether they are of yoga or of any religion for that matter. For me, trying to understand concepts that I have not experienced is only mental gymnastics.

There is no end to asking questions when using an intellectual concept. There is a 'why' to everything; there is a 'when' to everything, there is a 'how' to everything. There has to come a time when we should be able to leave aside that questioning mentality and just be. I think it is very much a personal experience. When we feel comfortable, when we feel that we are secure – internally, spiritually, emotionally, mentally – then the questioning aspect is left aside spontaneously. If there is a sense of insecurity in any of the levels, we will try to hang on to the sense of security and continue asking 'why?', 'when?', 'how?', 'why?', 'when?', 'how?'

My basic sadhana has been through yoga, through meditation, through other sadhanas of tantra and the vedic systems just to find that centre point where I am not pulled by the forces to either the side of attraction or to the side of repulsion. It is a very basic sadhana and yet it is the most important one and if it is not properly adopted in life, even the highest meditation won't do anything.

What would you say about questions like 'Why does my spine hurt?' – people are asking out of genuine interest?

Genuine interest will lead to a deeper experience of the process rather than the surface questioning, so I feel there is a difference between a real genuine interest and a conceptual interest.

Do you emphasize this aspect of interest to your students?

I think all spiritual traditions emphasize it; it's not only you or me, but it's basic common sense.

You once said that at a certain point you have to leave all systems, all yoga behind and use common sense and this is what you call transcendence.

Where did you read that?

In one of the “Questions and Answers.”

But if you can spread it around, if I can, then it will not be in short supply in future.

You also said enlightenment is perfection in day-to-day activities but that your swamis are not doing that.

Enlightenment is being yourself and not putting on a mask of either sinner or saint. People whom I train, especially the swamis, I come down on very hard because just the idea that, ‘I am a swami’ raises inside a feeling of superiority, a feeling of having become or attained something. It is a barrier to their own spiritual growth so I do come down very hard on people whom I train. I say, “No.”

It is a trust between teacher and a student. In the normal academic world, you have to do your training, your thesis, and then you get the degree; however, in the spiritual world, where everything is based on faith and personal dedication and personal conviction, you get the degree before with the hope that you will do your training and write your thesis. So, this is actually a trust between the teacher, the master and the aspirant, the disciple. If you break the trust, you are breaking down all the precepts that you can ever aspire to hold to yourself.

You have to know where you are going and decide on the path keeping the goal in mind – like at night you are going through a forest and in the distance you see a light. You know that the light is at that side. You go up and down, up the hill and down the hill, around the bend, but still you are walking towards the light. You have never let go of the direction of the light. Even if you cannot see it when you are going down

the hill, around a bend, behind boulders and rocks and trees, the awareness is there that I am going in the direction where I have seen the light.

So it is important to set the goals for the highest. Can I ask you what sort of success you have with your students in this?

I don't have any figures. I feel they have to be sincere to their commitment. I can only become an inspiration, that's all, and you go as far as you are able to. It may not take you to the end, but at least it will take you three steps forward. So in this case, a one hundred percent success rate – at least people move three steps from where they're stuck.

Do you think these days people have become cynical about the possibility of genuine transformation in people?

I am also cynical of that transformation because everyone reacts according to their samskaras and programming. Just like a computer works within the parameters of its program, in the same way human beings work within the parameters of their programming of samskaras and karmas and desires and aspirations and culture and society and religion and belief. These are all different systems which inhibit a free expression of human consciousness. Therefore, what are we trying to transform?

We can't transform ourselves. We can only change our attitude and our view and have the ability to look at things from a different perspective. A glass half full of water – to a pessimist it is half empty, to an optimist it is half full. Is it really half empty or half full? That's irrelevant, but it is our attitude and how we perceive things. Generally, we say it is half empty. Very few people say it is half full. And even less people accept the quantity which is there without any analytical reasoning.

What I meant was that, especially in the West, they don't think people can attain freedom – that there's not even the possibility.

In the West, people still talk of concepts which are not yet fully understood by the social and cultural background. Because

Christ tried to teach these values, he was crucified. Socrates and all the people who have spoken about some higher reality have always been subdued by society. And this is an historical fact; it is not speculation. There is a cultural gap. I'm not talking of a religious gap because religions evolve and decline in their own time, but the basic genetic samskara, put it that way, the cultural samskara, is not there in its full potential. It is there in its seed form but it has not evolved. Therefore, the West is looking at concepts from a scientific viewpoint. It is not pure acceptance, it is investigation, rejection and acceptance, which is a perfectly valid path anyway, so why worry? But I think we are not always as scientific as we'd like to make out. I think we don't like to make the emotional changes demanded to attain freedom and genuine transformation.

It has been an immense pleasure to be here and it has been a moment of joy in having seen you and interacted with you.

Yogic Revolution

24 December 1995, National College Auditorium, Bangalore

I come from Bihar, which has been the seat of many spiritual and cultural revolutions in the past. Today, Bihar is also becoming the centre of a yogic revolution which is altering the lives of many people throughout the world so the subject of today's satsang is this yogic revolution. What is yoga and how does it relate to us in our day-to-day life?

There are many misconceptions about yoga, even today. Some may believe yoga to be a spiritual science, others may believe it to be a physical form of exercise and activity, some may believe it to be a philosophy. From our understanding, however, we have come to realize that yoga can be understood in three ways: first as yoga philosophy; second as yoga psychology and third as the application of yoga in day-to-day life. These three are the subjects of the Bihar Yoga Bharati – the first Yoga University in the world, which is in the process of gaining recognition from UNESCO and from major universities around the globe, not only in India. It is truly a university in its purest sense.

Yoga philosophy

What is yoga philosophy? Philosophy represents the aspiration of every individual. It represents the aim in life, which should be followed by everyone in order to experience fulfilment and enrich their own lives. Yoga or yoga philosophy is not only physical, social, material, mental and emotional, but also spiritual. Our master, Swami Satyananda Saraswati,

has always said that a human being is a composition of three qualities: head, heart and hands. Head representing intellect, knowledge and wisdom; heart representing emotions and deeper feelings and hands representing *purushartha*, action. These three things are the prime ingredients of our lives, and the absence of any one makes life miserable, whereas harmony of the three will lead us to experience life in its full glory and potential. That is the basic philosophy of yoga. It is not self-realization; it is not union of the individual consciousness with God – that may be our final aspiration but that cannot be our aim now. According to the principles and theories of yoga, as you purify and harmonize your body, mind, emotions and intellect, the final result of this harmony may be God-realization. The symptom of having attained this harmony in life may manifest in the form of God-realization but God-realization is not the aim of yoga, and this has been very clearly stated in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali.

If you analyze and observe your life objectively, if you consider what the components of your life are, you will discover that you have a body, and through this body, you experience sickness and wellbeing, disease and health, and that is *prarabdha*, the karma of the body. It has been stated in the scriptures that once we are born into this life, we have to go through these three stages: disease, *vyadhi*; old age, *jara*; and death, *mrityu*. Sickness and health come to us in sequence. They are nothing but *prarabdha*, the destiny of the body. We cannot avoid it. This has been further understood by medical professionals, intellectuals and scientists throughout the world. They have come to realize that the attainment of health is not necessarily the absence of disease from life, rather it is the harmony of the various aspects of human nature and personality.

In our life, when we observe our body, we see illness and wellbeing, disease and health. In our life, when we observe our mind, we see that it goes through states of desire and craving to states of contentment, satisfaction and happiness. Then again we come to desire. We want and we crave and then again we experience satisfaction, joy and happiness. This is

known as the pattern of human consciousness which jumps from experiences of happiness to experiences of suffering, from experiences of desire to experiences of fulfilment. This is *vritti*. If we observe our innermost desires, we find that we fluctuate between our desire for peace, *shanti*, and our desire for struggle and *purushartha*. Now, when we live a life which is full of such cyclical movements in our physical body, we also experience this cyclical movement in our mental and emotional structure, and we experience this cyclical movement in our innermost personality.

What then, becomes the purpose of yoga? This cyclical movement is not confined only to the realm of the individual, but it is also the nature of *prakriti*, the nature of the entire cosmos. It is not only the nature of this created cosmos, it is also inherent in the nature of the divine. So if we analyze the whole process of perfection, of evolution, of attainment, then we will discover one important thing – there is never any stability in either human life or in cosmic manifestations, there is only continuity. We are going through the process of a ‘standing wave’ effect.

To clarify, take this simple example. Take a piece of rope 30 feet long, and tie one end to the handle of a door. Hold the other end and then move it up and down. What do you see? Do you see the whole rope come up and down at the same time or do you see a little wave travelling through the length of the rope? You will not see the whole rope go up and down, but you will experience little waves of motion travelling along the rope and it will create a pattern. That movement is known as the ‘standing wave’ effect. Life is such, and creation is such, evolution is such, and continuity is such. If you think you can attain stability in life, forget it! You will not be able to because it is not inherent in your nature; it is not even in our genes to attain stability in life. God did not have a stable nature, and we are the product of that God.

Study the Upanishads. It is clearly stated therein that God had the desire to become many from one. Why did He have it? It is a scientific fact that there is no stability in continuity. Evolution is continuity which is universal and also individual,

and that is the theory of evolution. One cannot be perfect in life. The moment you define perfection, you are creating a limit to the concept of perfection. Perfection represents an idea of an evolved nature. It represents the concept of an evolved and sublimated human personality – that's all. This is exactly what yoga says: realize that your life is a continuity and by realizing this, accept your life as it comes.

We humans have a peculiar tendency. We are unable to accept life as it comes to us. We have another peculiarity – we tend to live in our past and in our memories of past events which have gone; we tend to become fearful of the future, and we tend to ignore the present. This is the point where yoga comes in with a philosophy which says, 'Bygones are bygones; the past is past, we cannot alter or change it but we can derive wisdom from the experiences of the past. So be in the present, try to harmonize yourself in the present, and the moment you are able to manage the present properly, the future becomes a beautiful, evolving, unfolding experience of human nature.'

Yoga psychology

In order to give a practical dimension to this philosophy, yoga moves into human psychology, and this is where the *Yoga Sutras* come in, to teach us how to manage our mind so if you ask me what yoga is, I will say in one sentence, 'Yoga is nothing but a process of mind management.' We can define yoga by using the first three sutras of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. The entire psychological process of yoga is given there.

In the first sutra (1:1): *Athah yoga anushasanam*, Sage Patanjali has said that yoga is a form of discipline; however, it is not a form of discipline that can be imposed upon oneself. It is not a discipline to which you will submit yourself; it is a discipline that has to evolve naturally and spontaneously so that you can be aware of your inner being. The word being used for discipline is 'anushasan'. Shasana is the actual word, anu is the prefix. *Shasana* means 'to govern over, to rule over, to direct, to manage, to control.' The prefix, *anu*, pertains to the subtle aspects of human nature. It is implied here that

through yoga, you can go deep into yourself to discover the process of action and reaction that is happening within your personality, in the realm of feelings, behaviour, experiences and attitudes.

It is not only controlling one's thoughts that can lead one to concentration. It is not only becoming aware of what is happening inside one's head, by closing the eyes, that can be termed as meditation. It manifests externally also in the form of experiences, attitudes, performances, behaviour, thoughts, feelings, emotions and so on. It includes knowledge of those events that save and guide our lives, harmony with those events, understanding those events, and being able to direct those events. That is the concept of anushasan.

This is also the meaning of the word yoga. Yoga here represents the ability to realize, to understand, to control, to channel the flow of consciousness and energy as they interact in the subtle aspects of human personality. This control, this channelling implies that there is awareness. Without awareness you will not be able to direct the process which dominates energy and consciousness. It also implies that in order to fully control and guide these subtle forces, you must be able to harmonize the disturbances and imbalances which are created in the structure of energy and consciousness. If you are unable to control, guide or change the distractions and disturbances around you, then you are not a practitioner of yoga.

We all go through hatred throughout our life. We all suffer from stress, tensions and anxiety, and we all say stress is a horrible thing. We all know stress is something that is growing in society yet we are unable to control it. Why? Because what we need to control is the subtle interaction between the forces of energy and consciousness that manifest through our life in the form of action, behaviour, perception, attitudes and so on. So awareness is the first requirement of anushasana, discipline.

Discipline is an abstract way to describe the word 'anushasana'. Awareness is a requisite, being able to harmonize such fluctuations is another requisite. Only with awareness and

the ability to harmonize can you experience anushasana. You may wonder what the end result of this anushasana is. The end result of this harmony according to Patanjali, is the second sutra (1:2): *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah* – to be able to control the fluctuations of the mind. This is the most important statement. Patanjali is describing the result of having attained mastery over the fluctuations and imbalances of human nature and he has only used three words: chitta, vritti, and nirodhah.

What are the vritis? When you throw a stone into the middle of a body of water, what do you see? You see ripples coming out and extending towards the shores from the point where the stone has entered the water. These circular ripples of water that extend from one point towards the shore are the vritis. Events, situations and conditions in life make us respond every moment of the day in different ways; and not only respond, but they take control of our intellect, our emotions and our actions. The thing that takes control of our buddhi, of our bhavana and of our purushartha is the vritti.

Applying yoga in our life

Vritti is not just an isolated event that happens inside our head which we cannot observe. No! Vritti is the total expression of human personality at any given moment in which the qualities of head, heart and hands manifest their nature in different ways. Of course it is a subtle process and we are affected by it in many ways at different times.

I will give you one example: A person came one day and said, “Swamiji, I have been suffering from hypertension for a long time. I have tried every kind of medication but nothing has helped me. What can I do?” I was trying to find the cause of his hypertension and the person started to describe, “One day, after my retirement when I was sick, I demanded some milk from my daughter-in-law and she said something to me which I have not forgotten. She told me that I was behaving like a dog.” I asked him, “When she told you that, what was the image that came into your head?” He said, “Once she called me a dog, and told me that I was behaving like one, the first image that came into my mind was that of a street dog

with sores all over his body, lean and thin, a scrawny looking animal, starving to death, flies hanging around his body.” I said, “Of course you will get hypertension if you have that image of a dog. Why don’t you consider that you are the dog of a Memsahib? You have a beautiful silk bed to sleep on, you have delicious imported foods to eat, when you travel, you travel in an air-conditioned car. Conjure up this image and you won’t have hypertension.” The man was sent away and he said he would try. This is a true story. After a month he can back and said, “Swamiji, I have no more hypertension!”

Look at your life. The scriptures have stated that when you come into this life you have to pass through certain conditions which can alter your frame of mind. What are these conditions? In Sanskrit they are *jara*, *vyadhi* and *mrityu*. Once you come into this life you experience *vyadhi*, meaning disease, illness, pain, suffering, conflict, imbalance, stress and anxiety. Can we avoid it? No, even saints can’t avoid it. The only thing is that their perception of *vyadhi* has changed, so they are not affected by it, whereas we are affected by it. *Vyadhi* is an integral part of this life. Nobody is perfectly healthy. There is some imbalance somewhere in the human personality, whether it is in the body in the form of arthritis, rheumatism, asthma or diabetes, or something in the mind in the form of being unable to manage mental problems, frustrations and anxieties. There is karmic disease: mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual. Can we hope to attain absolute and total health? No, we cannot.

Jara, the second condition, means old age and infirmity. Can you stop yourself from becoming old? No. *Mrityu*, the third condition, means death. Can you stop yourself from dying? No. These are the conditions that we have to face in our life and they also manifest in our personality in the form of a *vritti*.

Yoga does not only talk of the five main *vrittis* mentioned by Patanjali: *pramana*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidra* and *smriti*; they are actually the broad categories of subtle *vrittis*. An emotion, a feeling, a desire or ambition is also a subtle *vritti* which then generates a force and moves outwards affecting

and altering our perception, our behaviour, our action, our interaction. *Abhinivesha*, the fear of death, is a *vritti*, it is a condition, it is a state. And yoga has stated very clearly that blockages of such *vrittis*, events which alter the potentiality of human life, can be harmonized with the practice of yoga.

The third sutra (1:3) gives the result of having control over the *vrittis*: *Tadaa drashtuh svaroope avasthaanam* – “Then the seer, the *sadhaka*, the aspirant, the practitioner, one who is living yoga, is able to establish himself or herself in the real nature of the self, which is unaffected by the external conditions of the world, by the changing situations in life.” This leads to greater perception of the world events. Once you are established in your true nature, *svaroope avasthaanam*, then *samadhi* is the symptom of that attainment. This is where we have to come to, the awakening of the faculties of consciousness and energy, *chetana* and *shakti*.

I am trying to express what I understand about the approach of yoga to the lessons in our life. Once we are able to become aware of this basic psychology and philosophy, we move into the practical aspect of yoga, which is self-management, mind management, personality management, life management, body management. This is also *purushartha*, the effort which we make to transform, change and sublimate the conditions that exist right now within us.

The rebirth of consciousness

I would like to mention one final thing. Today the whole world is getting ready to celebrate Christmas and we are sitting here discussing yoga. Let us try to understand how yoga is related to the Christmas spirit, for Christ is not a person, but a state of being. It is a state of consciousness. There are two things in life, two conditions of life. The first condition is the process of becoming. We all want to become, we all want to change, we all want to develop, we all want to grow, we all want to evolve. This is the process of becoming and if you are in the process of becoming then you are a *sadhaka*.

You are aware of the direction in which you are moving but once you have become that, then you experience the second

condition of life, the state of being, 'I am That I am', and it is that deeper awareness of the spirit which is known as the Christ state or the immaculate conception. This immaculate conception is not confined to mothers only, but can be applied to men because the immaculate conception represents the birth of a different, transcendental consciousness. It is not a physical birth; it is a spiritual birth. You know the meaning of the word untainted? Our consciousness at present is tainted by karmas, samskaras, vasanas and *kamanas*, desires, and so many things. They have left their imprints in our consciousness. It is difficult to become immaculate and untainted, but when we are talking of immaculate conceptions, we are talking about the process of sadhana, a process of experience which can evolve, develop and grow, and which takes us beyond the perceptions of body and mind, and which stabilizes us in the realm of the spirit. Therefore, always remember that spirituality is best for humankind. Spirituality begins where religion ends because spirituality is your own conception, your awareness, your own vision.

1996

Delhi



The Science of Yoga

November 1996, DIPAS (Defence Institute of Physiology and Applied Sciences), Delhi

It is an honour for me to be here once again and to have the opportunity to discuss the subject of yoga. Yoga is a subject that is becoming more and more relevant every day for the management of many sociological, psychological and physiological problems. That has been the understanding and the conclusion of the many thinkers, researchers, scientists and sannyasins who have made an effort to understand the subject of yoga.

How does yoga relate to the individual? There is a widespread belief that yoga is a philosophy. Some people believe it is part of Tantra; some say it is part of Samkhya and others say it is part of a spiritual tradition. Each may be right in their own way, but our understanding is that yoga is intimately linked with the lifestyle, mentality, basic philosophy and higher aspirations of an individual.

Our requirements today are physical health, mental wellbeing, to become creative, to expand the horizons of our consciousness, and to awaken the dormant energies of our personality in order to become a complete human being. These are the basic requirements for all of us, no matter what our profession or lifestyle may be.

How do we go about attaining physical health, mental wellbeing, developing our consciousness, attention, awareness, awakening the strengths of our personality and nature? This is where yoga comes in. Yoga provides a method for the attainment of all the different factors in our lives so that we can become complete. That is the beginning of yoga.

Raja yoga

I am going to deal with one branch of yoga – raja yoga – because it seems to be the most complete form of yoga relevant to modern man. Of course, this does not exclude the many other branches of yoga, such as kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, hatha yoga, karma yoga or bhakti yoga. The structure of raja yoga as defined by Patanjali, who was one of the codifiers of the yogic concept, covers the different aspects of human personality, from attitudes and behaviour to the experience of the higher consciousness in the form of samadhi.

According to Patanjali, the way to modify and harmonize human attitudes and behaviour is through the practices of yama and niyama. The way to obtain physical health and harmony is through asana and pranayama. The way to obtain mental health and wellbeing is through the practices of pratyahara and dharana. The way to develop and expand the horizons of our consciousness, to make it all comprehensive, is through *dhyana*, meditation, ultimately leading up to the experience of samadhi, which is not sensorial isolation from the world but a state in which we get a total picture of the world.

The whole process of yoga can be defined in this example. There is a computer picture of a face made up of dots, lying on a table. An ant crawls onto the image. What does it see? An image of a face, or a white field with black areas? It will only see a white field dotted all over with blotches. If somebody asks the ant, “What are you looking at?” it will answer, “I don’t know, it is just a big white field with black patches, some big, some small.” The person says to the ant, “Get onto my finger, come up a certain distance from the white field and then describe what you see.” As the ant goes higher, the image becomes clearer and sharper, and ultimately the ant may be able to say, “I can see the face of a person.”

A similar thing happens in our lives. We see everything in life – the universe, creation, philosophy, our activity and participation in society – from ground level as black spots on a white field. We never have a clear picture and so we become confused as to what we are meant to do in our lives, about what

our aspirations are. We start speculating that maybe the aim of life is realization of God, fusion of atma with paramatma. These speculations come forth in the form of a philosophical concept or belief. Many times we tend to ignore the basic realities of life which actually govern our personality, attitudes, behaviour, health, wellbeing and development.

It is here that Patanjali emphasized the subject of raja yoga. He has said that it is all right to have a personal belief, but remember that you live at different planes of human experience and it is up to you to realize, to know these different dimensions. The process of self-discovery begins with the subject of yoga.

The first explanation of yoga according to Patanjali is discipline. In the first statement of the *Yoga Sutras* (1:1), Patanjali has defined the concept of yoga as: *Athah yoga anushasanam*. *Atha* means 'there', 'now' or 'therefore'. *Yoga* means the practice, the philosophy, the entire structure of yoga, the science of consciousness. *Anu* is the prefix, *shasana* is the word meaning the ability to rule, to govern, to direct the manifestation of the subtle nature. Here, Patanjali has defined the concept of yoga as being a science, a subject by which one can control, direct and govern the subtle manifestations of human personality.

Manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara

What are the subtle manifestations? Areas of the mind, because in the second sutra (1:2) he says, *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah*. I have thought about why Patanjali has used the word 'chitta' in this context. According to the yogic tradition and other philosophical traditions, chitta is the third component of the human mind. The first component of the human mind is manas, the second is buddhi, the third is chitta, and the fourth component is ahamkara.

This is also true according to Samkhya philosophy which is a compilation of thoughts on the subject of the human mind, nature and consciousness. Just as raja yoga was codified by Patanjali in the form of the *Yoga Sutras*, Samkhya was codified by Sage Kapila. So we are looking at a subject which deals with the human mind, nature and personality.

Chitta is the third component of the mind. Why has Patanjali bypassed manas and buddhi? After thinking about this subject, I came to the conclusion that chitta is the aspect of mind which stores impressions so we can achieve a perspective and see the whole picture.

The ability to think, to contemplate and bring together the different sensory components is the activity of manas. Just as in order to create an image on the screen, a computer has to bring many different components: colours, dots, shades and shapes, and superimpose them one on top of the other so that a clear picture can be seen, in the same way it is the activity of manas which picks up the threads and puts them together to create images.

We smell something: before the smell is identified, it is only one component, one activity. We see something: before the image is identified as a particular type of flower, it is only an image. After the images have been put together and given an identity in the realm of manas that the whole image moves to the realm of buddhi. In buddhi, the rational process comes in and says, "This is white, the texture is soft; it is a type of flower which must have a particular perfume. It is rare." Buddhi actually brings out memories from chitta, compares them with the image, the impression, which is coming from manas, and identifies it. That image is again stored in chitta in the form of a memory, a *pratyaya*, an archetype.

According to yogic philosophy, manas and buddhi are the processing centres of information. The million gigabyte store, the hard disc, is our chitta where everything is being classified, stored, filed for future reference and comparison in the form of *smṛiti*, memory, in the form of *pratyaya*. These *smṛitis* and *pratyayas* have the strength to eventually become a *samskara* or a *karma*. This happens when the memory is associated with ego, *ahamkara*.

The fourth component of the mind, *ahamkara*, is the dimension which deals with self-image, self-esteem, nurturing of the individuality. Any memory or impression which nurtures our individuality increases our self-esteem, confidence, positivity and optimism. Any impression or memory which does not

nurture our ahamkara actually decreases our self-esteem, self-image, confidence, willpower and optimism, and we become pessimistic. When any memory or pratyaya from the level of chitta interacts with the ego component of our personality in a negative way, then aggression, fear and insecurity come up. When they interact in a positive way then positive human qualities manifest.

Vrittis

This has been the yogic concept of mind. So when Patanjali says, *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah* – “Yoga is to control the patterns of chitta,” then he is specifically referring to the memory, archetypes that are in our subconscious and unconscious mind. Otherwise he could have easily said, ‘*Yoga manas vritti nirodhah*’, or ‘*Buddhi vritti nirodhah*’, but he did not say that because he recognized that manas and buddhi only create images, impressions; the actual work is done by chitta.

Vritti means a pattern that is generated and which affects the behaviour, the performance, the expression of an individual. If something has no far-reaching consequences in the human personality, it will not be known as a vritti. *Vritya* means circular. If you throw a stone into a very still lake or pond, you will see round ripples where the stone falls, spreading out towards the shore. In the same way, images and impressions which are created by manas and buddhi, are like the stone that falls into the pond. As soon as that stone falls into chitta, vrittis are generated, and these vrittis alter our expressions, our beliefs, our performance and interactions with family, friends and society.

Management of the vrittis has been the theme of yoga. Yoga is identified as a subject of psychology, a subject that deals with the totality of human nature and human psyche. This is also the beginning of yoga.

Asana

Before going into depth, I want to come back to the practices of yoga. According to raja yoga, the physical practices of yoga are asana and pranayama. Asanas are body postures

which help rectify the imbalances of all the bodily systems: muscular, skeletal, endocrinal, respiratory and cardiovascular. That is the purpose of asana. Surprisingly enough, Patanjali has again described asana in one sentence, in the *Yoga Sutras* (2:46) as: *Sthiram sukham asanam* – “A posture in which one is steady and comfortable.”

Stillness and comfort are symptoms of a body which is balanced and in harmony. It is the nature of our body to continuously move. We are always in a hurry. Our body is continuously in motion even when we are sitting down. There is no awareness of the body. Some people continuously move their legs while they are seated, unconsciously. Some people keep shifting their body or scratching their finger. We all have our own peculiar traits which indicate that our body is never still. Our mind is continuously in motion, our thoughts are in motion; therefore our body is in motion.

When Patanjali speaks of asana as a posture in which one can be still and comfortable for some time, he is indicating a physical state that is absolutely quiet, no matter what one does. Whatever posture you do, be comfortable in it. That is the end result of asana practice. However, in order to come to this experience of physical stability we have to train our body with simple movements to remove stiffness from the joints, to provide flexibility, to loosen up and release tension from the joints and muscles, to encourage circulation of the blood, oxygen, and prana shakti through the system. In the process we find that many of the imbalances and illnesses which occur in the body are removed, and there is a sense of health.

In the 1970s the Australian Cancer Research Foundation and Dr Ainslie Meares conducted an experiment into the management of cancer using yoga practices. They used *nadi shodhana pranayama*, alternate nostril breathing; *yoga nidra*, the state of deep relaxation; mantra japa to focus the mind, to overcome the fear and insecurity related with the disease and their life; and meditation combined with a simple group of asanas known as the pawanmuktasana series. Those of you who know yoga will realize that these are absolutely basic,

simple practices, not complicated or advanced yoga postures. It was found that a reversal was happening, and those patients who had only six to eight months to live are still alive today.

What does this research indicate? Yoga is able to regulate the biorhythms of the body and in this process, the diseases, illnesses and imbalances of the different systems are rectified. This is the keyword of asana – to become aware of the natural biorhythms, and to live according to those biorhythms if you want to obtain good health. Asanas help you to achieve this state.

Pranayama

Pranayama is the second component. The common yogic belief is that in our body there is a structure of energy known as prana shakti. *Prana shakti* is not oxygen or negative ion or bio energy. It is something totally different called the life force. Some people have even proved through the practices of pranayama that if you can tap the source of prana shakti, you can live without breathing.

I come from the tradition of Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh who is our paramguru. He had many outstanding disciples such as Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Venkatesananda, my guru Swami Satyananda, and many more who were sent throughout the world to propagate yoga.

One disciple of Swami Sivananda was Swami Nadabrahmananda. In the late 1970s, he was invited by Dr Elmer Green to the Menninger Foundation, USA, to conduct research on prana. Swami Nadabrahmananda had perfected the science of *kumbhaka*, breath retention. Dr Green's research was unique. Three airtight glass chambers were constructed. A burning candle was placed in one chamber and the candle went out after three minutes because the oxygen was finished. A monkey was placed in another glass cage and the monkey became unconscious after ten minutes because of the high carbon content. Swami Nadabrahmananda was in the third chamber, his body covered with wax, ears and nose plugged, eyes closed. Each orifice of the body, including the pores, was sealed. He was asked to hold his breath while his blood

pressure, GSR, ECG, EEG, and so on, were monitored. For forty minutes he sat there without breathing. He played the tabla. A coin was placed on his forehead. By directing vibrations from his body, he made the coin jump two or three inches above his head.

This research is fully documented and has been videotaped. As scientists you will understand what happened, but from my perspective what actually happened? Can a person live without breathing for forty minutes? I have seen Swami Nadabrahmananda not breathe for one-and-a-half hours in normal circumstances. Forty minutes was the time limit of the experiment. He said, "I have perfected the practice of pranayama. I am able to utilize prana shakti to rejuvenate and recharge the cells of my body, therefore, I can live without breathing."

Of course, this is an extreme example of prana shakti, of what one can achieve by regular practise of pranayama. What I am trying to tell you is that energy is another component of the human body which has nothing to do with body heat, stamina or the electromagnetic field of the body. It is totally different. No scientist has been able to define prana. There have been some speculations, some ideas, but never a confirmed conclusion. According to yogic theory, the practices of pranayama help to activate and rejuvenate the left and right hemispheres of the brain. They help to harmonize the activities of the nervous system. Asana and pranayama are the physical components of raja yoga.

Pratyahara

The mental components of raja yoga consists of pratyahara and dharana. Pratyhara and dharana are actually practices which help us, in stage one, to relax. The first practice of pratyahara is yoga nidra. You may be familiar with the process of yoga nidra in which we are taught how to synchronize the activities of the body, mind and attention and how to reach a state of deep relaxation.

Then we move into other areas of pratyahara where we focus on different components of the mind. We start

with manas where thoughts are created, where different components of the sensorial experiences are superimposed on top of each other. The pratyahara practice which deals with the manas aspect is the technique of *antar mouna*, or inner silence. Antar mouna is a technique of concentration which begins with a very simple awareness of the sensorial experiences. What am I experiencing now through my senses? Through my feelings? What am I feeling? What am I hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting? One identifies different components, then the practice evolves into a technique where we observe our thoughts in relation to the sensorial experiences.

Then we move into the aspect of buddhi, using the techniques of antar darshan and hamsa dhyana. The buddhi vrittis are managed by these two meditations. They are practices of concentration and observation which help us to analyze what is happening at the realm of *buddhi*, rationality, interaction, attitudes and behaviours.

Then we move to chitta. The chitta vrittis are managed, harmonized and channelled with the dharana practice of *trataka*, focusing of the sensory and the mental faculties so that there are no distractions or dissipations, and one becomes fixed, one-pointed. Trataka is the first dharana practice to work at the realm of chitta. After trataka, after being focused to manage the other vrittis, the other patterns, the other impressions, the other samskaras which are continually being formed inside, we move into three distinct levels of human experience: the instinctual level, the emotional level and the intellectual level.

Instinct-level experiences are related to fears, security and sexuality, ambitions and desires, self-preservation. They are managed by a group of meditative techniques known as daharakasha dharana, which allow us to observe the basic tendencies of life which are predominant in our behaviour.

The second level is the emotional structure: the need for recognition, the need for love and affection, the uncontrolled expressions of anger, jealousy and hatred which also manifest in our day-to-day interactions. They are harmonized by

a series of practices belonging to hridayakasha dharana which allow us to observe our emotions. A psychiatrist or psychoanalyst asks continually, “How do you feel? Can you define that feeling? How do you express an emotion? Can you define an emotion?” In the same way, an enquiry is made into the nature of emotions through these dharana practices. Our volatile and passive natures are observed.

The third level, the component of the intellect, is observed by a group of practices belonging to chidakasha dharana. In chidakasha dharana we bring up impressions, memories, samskaras which are stored; forgotten memories that somehow affect and alter our behaviour. In this way we go through practices that affect the vrittis of chitta; therefore, in the wider context, yoga is a science of mental health, a science of consciousness.

When we are able to manage our mind optimally, then certain transformations happen naturally, and these transformations are seen as following the precepts of yama and niyama. This is a natural transformation. Yama and niyama become part of your life, they are not imposed disciplines. They become a natural expression of the integrated and harmonized personality. It is only after yama and niyama have become a spontaneous natural expression of your life, that the process of meditation begins and we enter into the realm of consciousness, not before.

Consciousness . . . what is consciousness? According to the yogic philosophy, the *indriyas*, the senses, are like the tentacles of an octopus connected to manas. Then manas is connected to buddhi. Buddhi is connected to chitta. Chitta is connected to ahamkara. This collection of faculties is known as the gross mind, and this is the aspect of consciousness which interacts, which relates to the world: the created world, the manifest world, the objective world, the world of name, form and idea. This world is confined to the influences of time, space and object. As you move from this dimension of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara you experience a transcendental nature of your personality which is consciousness – chetana. This chetana is the first experience of the human spirit, *atma*.

The awareness, the experience of chetana is the first glimpse of atma, the transcendental nature. We are not going to look at the concept of atma from a religious perspective or from a philosophical aspect. Let us look at it from the concept of consciousness. 'Consciousness' is the English word for chetana. *Chetana* means to be aware. So consciousness has a component that is continually aware. In the absence of awareness, you will not know what consciousness is. In meditation, when you progress to the chitta vrittis then concentration happens, and along with concentration, awareness develops gradually. This we call *sajakta*, and this awareness is not confined to one activity, it is not confined to one experience. It is a continued experience meaning you are aware of what is happening in the environment in relation to yourself and how you are responding to situations.

This *sajakta* awareness leads us to a greater understanding of the chetana awareness or consciousness, allowing us to see different levels of interactions: at the ahamkara level, at the manas level, at the buddhi level, and at the chitta level. Let us say by this time you have moved from the individual dot level of the indriyas to a few steps higher, so you can see a bigger and better picture. The little, little dots have now become a shape, and from here it depends how far you go into meditation. You can go into the state of *samadhi*, advanced meditation where the union of the lower or gross mind with the higher mind has taken place, and where you are able to hold that state for an extended period of time. So we should remember that yoga has many roles to fulfil. One role is attainment of physical health, a second role is management of the mind, a third role is increase of human potential so we can understand how the mind is structured and relates to the world, yet not be limited to that; so that we can have a glimpse of our true nature as the atma, the embodied spirit, and live that awareness.

Practical applications

All the different research which is going on in various countries, in my understanding, further validates the yogic concept of health management. Given the immense potential

of yoga, it is not astonishing that many eminent scientists have accomplished the following:

- Dr Dean Ornish, USA or our Dr Wasir here in India, have incorporated various components of yoga practices for the management of cardiac disorders.
- Research was done at the K.E.M. Hospital, Bombay, by Dr K.K. Datey using shavasana for the management of hypertension. It was very simple, basic research.
- Research was done on the management of diabetes by Dr Panda at the Burla Medical College, Orissa. Research was done on the management of gastric disorders.
- Research was done on the management of cancer in Australia.
- Research was done on the management of addiction in the US.
- Alpha research was done on meditative states by Dr Joe Kamia in San Francisco, USA.
- Research was done by Dr Todd Mitena on the yogic approach to biofeedback in Berkeley University, USA.
- In Australia research is being done on the increase of melatonin through the practices of trataka, ajapa japa, mantra, breath awareness and meditation.
- Research is going on into the management of AIDS in England.

In the management of many psychological disorders, psychiatrists and psychologists are using yoga techniques in Australia, in the UK, in Germany, in Austria and in the US. There is a wide scope to yoga, and as Indians it becomes our duty in a sense, to know what yoga can offer to humanity at large because it is a science, and it comes from this country. In Bihar we have had the opportunity to work closely with the health department. We are teaching yoga therapy in many medical colleges. We are teaching yoga in twenty-four prisons in Bihar and this program has been going on for the last two years with some outstanding results.

We have had the opportunity to work closely with the army in the past, especially in the Ladakh and Bikaner areas, to devise programs for the management of high altitude and

desert conditions: problems of heat, isolation and so forth. We have also been bringing yoga into the mainstream of modern education. We have been successful and accepted so far; therefore, it becomes our duty to know the scope and the application of yoga. Let us hope that we can present to the world a definite direction and guidelines for the use and application of yoga for the growth of the human personality.

Satsang

November, DIPAS, Delhi

You are stressing raja yoga but lately bhakti yoga has been said to be most appropriate.

I am not only an exponent of raja yoga. I deal with all the yogas but I chose raja yoga today as I felt it was appropriate for all of us who are here today, from a physiological background and from a psychological background. For the management of the present sociological problems, raja yoga is better equipped than other yogas, such as kriya yoga and kundalini yoga, because they are the spiritual aspect of yoga, which go deeper into the awakening of the shakti within. Of course these yogas also become important as we progress in raja yoga. When you deal with the mental aspects of pratyahara and dharana, human nature, mentality and our impressions, then there is some involvement of the other yogas also, so that the growth of our personality is not one-sided, it is homogeneous. However, raja yoga was chosen as the main subject for all of you here today.

About the bhakti movement: bhakti is not just devotion, although it is often said that bhakti means devotion. From the yogic concept, *bhakti* is purity of emotion. Emotions are a force, they are energy directed and identified in different ways. When my emotion is directed towards you, it is identified as friendship. When my emotion is directed towards my lover, it is identified as passion. When my emotion is directed towards my children, it is identified as affection. The same emotion directed towards a person who may be considered my enemy,

is known as animosity, hatred. The same emotion directed towards a person who is my competitor, is known as jealousy. The same emotion directed towards money and my pocket, is known as greed. And the same emotion, when directed towards God, is known as *bhakti*.

Being aware of, and channelling emotion towards an idea, a concept, a belief, makes you grow mentally, emotionally and spiritually, and that is known as *bhakti*. I believe, and our gururji has also said that, "Just as we are doing physiological research now, in the coming century, scientists will be doing *bhakti* research to see how emotions can uplift a human being, when channelled properly."

Bhakti is not only God's name or devotion to God or adherence to a belief, *bhakti* is harmonization of all worldly emotions and giving it a focus. Of course, this understanding is not there in society today. I can speak to you about the actual reason behind *bhakti*, but as a culture, as a civilization, we have identified *bhakti* with God and with rejection of worldly attractions, which in my opinion, is not necessarily important right now. Maybe it becomes relevant in a future life, but it's not relevant right now.

We should understand *bhakti* as an emotion. You know, a mother hears that her sons and daughters who have lived in other cities for a long time are coming to visit her and stay for lunch. While she is cooking the meal there is a sense of joy, there is a sense of happiness, 'I am cooking for my children who are coming to visit me.' She brings forth all her creativity, thinking, 'My son likes this and my daughter prefers that, the food should be prepared in this particular way. Their families don't like that, but they enjoy having this.' All that knowledge is in the back of her head. She is not repeating the name of her sons and daughters while cooking the food but the constant awareness is there that, 'I am cooking the food for them and they like it in this way.' In the same way, you don't have to verbally repeat '*Ram, Ram, Ram*' twenty-four hours of the day to prove your devotion as long as you are aware of that name in the back of your head. So, devotion is not an external ritual, it is an inner awareness of the higher reality.

Can one achieve confidence and strong willpower without being full of ahamkara?

Ego and arrogance are different. In yoga we talk of ahamkara as an identity of the self, not as arrogance. *Ahamkara* is a combination of the two words 'aham' and 'akara'. *Akara* is form, shape, identity, and *aham* is individuality, so *ahamkara* is a state in which we recognize our individuality.

In normal communication we use the word 'ahamkara' in the negative sense, meaning an egoistic person. In the yogic sense ahamkara is a state of self-recognition. When ahamkara is positive then it uplifts: there is optimism, confidence, clear communication, awareness of how one interacts with others. In the negative sense, when it becomes demeaning, then the aggression related with ahamkara comes out, and in order to hide a weakness, superimposition of ideas takes place: 'Who is he to tell me anything? I know much more than he does. I can do this and I can do that.' That is all a form of aggression. It is arrogance, the bullying nature. So, ahamkara itself is not a bad thing.

Different institutions teach different types of raja yoga. Is there a standard?

There are many institutions in the world, whether it is the Bihar School of Yoga or the Brahma Kumaris or institutions of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi or anybody for that matter, who teaches a type of yoga. The actual definition of yoga has already been given in the scriptures: the *Yoga Sutras* is one point of reference, the *Dattatreya Samhita* is another. Similarly, in hatha yoga there are different scriptures, such as *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by Swatmarama and *Gherand Samhita* by Sage Gherand, which are recognized literary works on hatha yoga.

There are many institutions in the world which, according to the understanding of the founder, teach one subject of yoga, or a particular philosophy; however, the philosophy which has come down from one person is according to the ideas, beliefs and experiences of that particular person, and is not necessarily in conformity with the tradition. So, I feel

that in order to be widely accepted as a system, it is important to look back into the tradition.

Just to give you an example, Transcendental Meditation as taught by Maharishiji is a technique of pratyahara – mantra, breath and meditation in the tradition that is known as ajapa japa. Ajapa japa has been referred to in the ancient texts. Kabir gave this description, “If one chants the mantra twenty-one thousand six hundred times a day, or once with each breath, with a one-pointed mind and total dedication, then the *anahata* or the unstruck sound is automatically heard.” Maharishiji chose this practice because it is simple, anybody can do it, and that became his trademark.

The Buddhist meditation practice, vipassana, is gaining in popularity nowadays. Vipassana is also a yogic practice known as *shoonya dhyana*: breath awareness, cessation of thoughts and observation of the silent state inside. Again it has been described by Kabir, “The jnani or the wise man says, ‘The pot is in the water and water is in the pot; the pot is surrounded by water inside as well as outside. When the pot breaks, water merges into water’.”

Kabir’s poem and the descriptions and techniques of the yogic tradition show that the yogic tradition has been using vipassana, or shoonya meditation, over the ages. Similarly, in yoga, sensorial awareness, witnessing the thoughts, letting them drop, aware and becoming established in inner silence is *antar mouna*. In the Jain tradition it is known as *preksha dhyana*.

Each founder or exponent of a school of thought chose one simple technique, developed it and propagated it. Now, as scientists or as sannyasins we are not concerned with one specific technique, although we do have our own specialized technique of yoga nidra. Yoga Nidra is our trademark just as TM is the trademark of Maharishiji, Preksha Dhyana is the trademark of Jainism and Vipassana is the trademark of Buddhism. Yoga Nidra is the trademark of the Bihar School of Yoga because it was developed by our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, however, the practice existed previously in the nyasa system of tantra and yoga.

In yoga philosophy, is a distinction made between the brain and the mind? How are manas, buddhi and chitta related to the functions of the brain and mind?

From my understanding, yogic literature has not spoken of, or studied the brain as a physical thing. Nowadays, concepts and theories of the brain have come to the fore. I agree with you. We have always supported the view that manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara interact with each other. Self-esteem and self-image are positive expressions of human nature.

We can say that yoga speaks of mind: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, as containing aspects of consciousness. Self-esteem is an important function - the manas function of the brain. Ahamkara would develop later and help change even a person like Valmiki.

From the yogic perspective, the mind and the brain have two different roles. The brain is the controller of the physical body, its senses, the sensorial activities, the nervous activities and so forth. The brain is the controller of the sensorial experiences in this sensorial world. The brain's activity is neurological. Although we receive information through the senses and the other neurons, and the same impressions are being created and conducted in the left and right hemispheres, they are without the component of consciousness.

The consciousness is the controller of supra-sensorial experiences. So we have a sensorial level and an extra-sensorial or a supra-sensorial level, and we interact with both. They are interrelated because the sensorial experience creates an impression in the brain and in the mind, and the supra-sensorial experience can also be accessed through the mind, and then creates an impression in the brain. However, we have to be clear on one point, that while the brain is a neurological activity and function, the mind is a conscious function.

So, I understand the brain and the mind to be interrelated concepts or parts, in which the brain does the physical processing and the mind does the processing in the realm of consciousness. They work together while fulfilling different roles.

Do you have video or audio recordings on yoga for specific ailments?

We have books on those aspects, but we are not keen on audio or video tapes for therapy purposes because each body is different. Yoga practices are not standard for every kind of disease, rather they vary from individual to individual according to ego, flexibility, body weight and necessity. Therefore, we have purposely refrained from making any kind of therapy recordings because we believe that is an interaction between the doctor and the patient.

Human nature is always governed by three gunas: tamas, rajas and sattwa. We change from sattwic to rajasic to tamasic to rajasic and back to sattwic at certain times and periods in our life due to situations and circumstances.

Can we benefit from pronouncing mantras while we are engaging in day-to-day activities? Do we have to pronounce the mantra ourselves to get the benefit?

There has to be some personal involvement, although with mantra different things happen. Therefore, I can give the answer in two ways. Mantra is actually a sound vibration which changes the environment. Even if you play a recording while you are working, if you can tune yourself to the environment created by the mantra, you will get the benefits.

There are three methods of repeating a mantra. In order to know which one is right for you, you have to be alert to your mental state and condition. If you are repeating the mantra mentally and become drowsy, introverted, start going to sleep, and slip from using the mantra with awareness, then at that moment start moving your lips and whisper it quietly to yourself. That is *upanshu* repetition. Being a physical activity, this helps you to again focus on the use of the mantra. If you are still becoming introverted and falling asleep, then the third practice is vocalizing the mantra.

All three styles have the same effect, although mental repetition is the most powerful because it focuses you completely and does not allow dissipation of attention through speech, sound or breath and that helps concentration.

If a mantra is chanted for another person, will an effect be transmitted? How?

About a year ago, a lady went into a coma in Patna hospital. All the family: husband, brothers, sisters, cousins, sons and daughters sat around the bed and started to chant the *Mahamrityunjaya* mantra. The lady had been in a coma for three days. After about an hour of chanting, she opened her eyes and said, “Now my time has come, I wish to leave this body. Please stop chanting the mantra.” She actually took leave of everyone present, then closed her eyes. After a while she opened them again and said, “Someone is still chanting the mantra, please ask them to stop.” The lady’s daughter had continued chanting the mantra behind the nurse’s screen, and the moment she stopped chanting, the lady left her body. This happened in front of about twenty people, all the family members who were chanting the mantra. They told people about what happened afterwards.

This is one example of how mantras, while creating vibrations, can alter the energy field and environment in the room of a sick person and help them. One can also transmit the mantra over a distance. Every Saturday night in our ashram we do a special chanting of the *Mahamrityunjaya* mantra for people who send their names with requests for the alleviation of problems, illness, disease and so on. These requests come to us from all parts of the world. We have received many reports that, after the chanting is over, people feel they have been helped.

In chanting the mantra the intensity of concentration is important. If you can intensify your concentration and chant, then it will have a direct impact. If it is done by a group all focused on that person, it will help. Yet, if it is chanted at random, if you are thinking about something else and there is no focus, the mantra will be meaningless. Mantras are like a gun. You have to aim and then shoot; you can’t shoot and then aim.

Are mantra and prayer the same thing?

No. Mantra is the vibration which affects the different psychic centres of the body, the *chakras*. Although we try to understand the nature of the mantra, and different religions have identified different deities with mantras, in actual fact,

mantras are *spandan*, sound vibrations. If you study kundalini yoga, you will see that lotus flowers are symbols of the chakras. There is one mantra written on each petal of the different lotuses, and these mantras are all the vowels and consonants of the Devanagari script. There are fifty-two from mooladhara up to ajna. In sahasrara it is a combination of all these sounds.

People who think in religious terms will say that *Om Namah Shivaya* is a Shaiva mantra which means, “I bow down to Lord Shiva.” A yogi will say, “No, *Om* is the bija mantra of ajna chakra, ‘na’, ‘ma’, ‘shi’, ‘va’, ‘ya’ are different syllables or sounds, which correspond to different chakras.” *Ya* is the bija mantra that corresponds to anahata, *va* to swadhisthana. Each mantra is actually related with different chakras.

I have noticed that when westerners take a mantra, they have no concept of whether it is a Shaiva, Shakta or a Vaishnava mantra. For them it is just a combination of sounds. Therefore, they are helped much more quickly than Indians who have a preconceived notion that this mantra belongs to Lakshmi or Shiva, Shakti, Durga, Kali, Krishna or Ram. Diversification of mental concentration takes place when we begin to identify a mantra with a concept, but if you just concentrate on the sound, you get more immediate results.

According to the tantric system, the literal meaning of the word *mantra* is *mananat, trayate, iti mantrah* – “the force which liberates the mind from bondage.”

How is food related to yoga?

Food has to be considered as per the need of the body, as per the biorhythms of the body, and not as per your taste which means that there are certain times of the day when our digestive processes or other autonomic activities, the activities of glands, hormones and systems, are functioning at their peak performance. The traditions have also stated that one should eat food between sunrise and sunset, not before and not after, because it is the light, the sun which controls many of the biorhythms and internal organs of our body. It is a well-known fact that light plays a vital role in the stimulation of biorhythms and a lot of research has been done to prove this.

According to yogic ideas, if you can consume your meals between sunrise and sunset, your digestion will be optimum and you won't suffer from any kind of stomach disorders. Another rule in yoga is: eat anything you want but make sure it is digestible, light, and gives vitality and not lethargy to the body. We don't tell people, "Don't consume meat, become vegetarian." No, that is not our purpose; we only tell them to eat moderately. We don't tell people not to drink, but we advise to drink only moderately, as per the need of the body, and from time to time go through a technique of hatha yoga to cleanse the body of toxins. That technique is known as shankhaprakshalana.

Shankhaprakshalana is a technique of cleaning the entire digestive tract from the oesophagus down to the anus with water and it is a very efficient process to eliminate the undigested food particles that get stuck in the mucous lining of our digestive system and later on become toxins, giving excess bile, *pitta*, gas, *vata* and mucous, *kapha*.

The only rules of food consumption in yoga are: follow the biorhythms of the body, eat between sunrise and sunset, eat moderately, and take food which is easily digestible to ensure that there is proper assimilation of the minerals, vitamins and proteins from the food into the body. That is known as *sattwic ahar*, sattwic food. Sattwic ahar does not mean milk or fruits, it means food which is compatible to the body.

It is said that yoga entails changing one's lifestyle. Without observing niyama there can be no asana practice and without being established in asana practices there is no pranayama. There are many do's and don'ts. Nowadays, people want to pick up from wherever they want and try to come to completeness because it is difficult to immediately change one's lifestyle. So in our research projects we just try to find out the effects of yogic exercises on mental functions, for example when people can't give up alcohol or cigarette smoking. Is it wrong?

No, it is not wrong. Yoga is of the opinion that you should not enforce any discipline; rather the discipline should be

the spontaneous outcome of your practices. Once your body becomes used to a particular pattern of lifestyle, it begins to reject many things that are unnecessary. Till today, I have not asked anybody to give up meat or to give up alcohol, but three, four, five or six months later they do not feel like having it, they realize the body does not need it; they can live without it.

Therefore, in the modern context, where we have to deal with different mentalities, cultures and lifestyles, whether eastern or western, we have to recognize what we need at present. If the need is optimum physical health, then practise yoga only for that. If the need is a method to manage stress, then practise yoga only for that and gradually move from that point. For those people who wish to change their lifestyle radically and completely, there are other disciplines that they can follow provided they have the willpower, *sankalpa shakti*, to actually go through that transformation and change in life. Some people can do it, some can't.

How can we decide what type of food the body needs – protein, carbohydrate, cereal, greens, meat, chicken, and so on?

Allow your body to decide for you. There are many theories. Last week I heard a doctor say that a colourful diet is the right one for the body: a bit of red, a bit of green, a bit of brown, a bit of black, a bit of everything, red meaning fruit, green meaning vegetable, brown meaning dal. They have gone beyond macrobiotics and this is the concept today. Make your diet as colourful as possible, a rainbow diet, but from my experience, there comes a time when the body decides for itself what it needs and there is no desire for unnecessary things.

1998

Mumbai



Yoga and Health

20 May 1998, Mumbai

The topic for today is management of disease through yoga. Before we go into the subject, I would like to define what yoga is and what yoga means in our context, today.

In society there are different ideas about this subject, and we tend to relate the yogic practices with spiritual life and spirituality. This is all very well because yoga has a lot to do with everybody's life; whether it be material or social, physical, mental, or spiritual, but to think that it is only meant for spiritual emancipation is a misconception. To think that it aims for the unity between man and the divine is also wrong. To think that the purpose of yoga is to unite the individual soul with the cosmic self is also incorrect, for yoga is not a philosophy which advocates abstract ideas; it cares for the realities that surround us. Rather, the beginning of yoga is realizing the needs of body, the needs of mind, the strengths of body, the strengths of mind, the weaknesses of body, the weaknesses of mind, and trying to find a way to balance the dissipations, disturbances and distractions which we experience in our lives. This is the beginning of yoga.

The subject of yoga is probably wider than medical science. Just as in medical science there is the possibility of knowing the basics and becoming a general practitioner, there is also the possibility of specializing in a specific field, a specific area and becoming a specialist. Similarly, in yoga there are subjects about which we can have a general understanding, and there are areas which need specialization. The most common forms of

yoga recognized in the world are hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, mantra yoga, jnana yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, and maybe a few others as well.

These are only certain aspects of yoga which we can practise and perfect. After having perfected these yogas, we move into other aspects of yoga which are not publicly taught or talked about. Every tradition contains within itself something that is common and applicable to the needs of everyone, and at the same time it contains within itself secret doctrines. So what we consider as yoga today is something we have been exposed to, but yoga is much more than that.

The five koshas

Human life also is much more than what is seen, what is experienced, and what we feel it to be. There are various components of human life; we are only aware of body and mind, and even the understanding that we have a body and mind is very superficial.

Yoga believes that there is multidimensional existence, and recognizes this existence of every individual. This multidimensional existence is not just body, mind and spirit, but dimensions of experience where you can have different or altered perceptions of life. These levels of multidimensional experience in yoga are recognized as koshas. The material or physical body is known as *annamaya kosha*, the dimension which is sustained and is nurtured by material objects – food, *anna*, to sustain and nourish the body. The mental dimension is known as *manomaya kosha* and this manomaya kosha is sustained and nurtured by stimulations, cravings, desires, aspirations, motivations. The third dimension is recognized as *pranamaya kosha*, the dimension of energy, *prana shakti*, in the absence of which we would not be able to function and survive. This is an important factor. This is a reality as well.

Once, I had the opportunity to visit a medical institution and I was taken to a chamber where dead bodies were kept for dissection purposes. I was shown the dead bodies lying on the benches and tables, and as I was looking at them, I was experiencing a different state of mind. The fully grown

body with physical organs, brain, everything in it, but still, dead. What is it that flows in the body and makes us live? And what is it that, when it leaves the body, we die? I remembered a passage from the Upanishads in which the sages have said it is *maha prana*: when it enters the body, it brings life into existence and when it leaves the body it allows death to end the life. This happened many, many years ago and it was a moment of realization for me because I could see that it was the force of prana shakti which can give birth to life.

In the absence of prana shakti there is no life. Life is prana shakti. Life is vitality. Life is dynamism. Life is energy. This aspect is recognized in yoga as pranamaya kosha. We experience this prana shakti in our limited way, as it manifests in our body at present, in the form of body heat, dynamism, activity, strength and stamina, in the form of the electromagnetic waves, circuits and fields which exist within the physical body and which can be seen today with scientific equipment. But this is not the final experience of prana shakti.

Just as the electricity lighting this bulb has gone through many stages of conversion and transformation by passing through various transformers, similarly the prana shakti which is experienced in this body or can be seen by various equipment such as a Kirlian equipment, is only a stepped down version of prana shakti. You can't light a bulb with 11,000 kilowatts flowing in a wire. You can light a bulb with 220 volts coming in the wire. Similarly, with prana, you can't expect life to survive when prana is, say, 11,000 kilowatts, but life will survive when prana is 220 volts. Therefore, yogis have recognized that the field of prana shakti is a vast area, part of which controls and governs our life, and it is because of the depletion of this prana shakti that we age.

The fourth dimension of life is recognized as *vijnanamaya kosha*, in which you come in contact with your inner nature. Our present mind does not reflect our inner nature. Our present mind is subject to influences and changes. Our present mind is subject to environment and beliefs, and it changes colours continuously. The colours of the mind, in yogic terminology, are known as *vruttis*. That is the manifest mind,

yet there is the other aspect of mind which is harmonious, balanced, tranquil, and which is awakened and realizable. This vijñanamaya kosha, the fourth dimension of human experience, represents the realization, the attainment of inner consciousness. The fifth dimension of human experience is known as the *anandamaya kosha*, the dimension of bliss.

These five dimensions together create the human personality. These five dimensions together create life. These five dimensions, when they come together, create this body, this nature, this personality, which is then given a name and which is then recognized by the name, Swami Niranjanananda or this person or that person.

The coming together of these different dimensions, forces or conditions to create life is an extraordinary event. Life is not born because of the union between parents. No. Life is born because conditions have been right for these things coming together. If the conditions are not right, many times the baby is born dead. If the conditions are not right, many times the baby is born retarded. If the conditions are right, then many times babies are born as geniuses.

These are some concepts which yoga has maintained over the ages as true and valid. When these conditions are right, there is a state of harmony, a state of comfort and happiness. When this condition of comfort, happiness and harmony is not existing, then you experience disease.

Dis-ease

If you look at the word disease itself, you see it is composed of dis + ease. What is the meaning of ease? The meaning of ease is comfort, harmony. The meaning of ease is a joyous expression. When you are comfortable, happy and at ease with yourself, then what happens? Your nature is different, your creativity, behaviour and attitude are different. However, when that ease of the body is somehow disturbed and shattered, then what happens? It gives birth to disease.

Yogis have recognized that there are three main classifications of diseases: *adhibhautika*, diseases which come from outside; *adhidaivika*, diseases which are destined

and *adhyatmika*, diseases which come up from one's own personality.

Adhibhautika: we can consider pollution as an agent which gives rise to disease, whether it be environmental pollution or water pollution or food polluted by chemicals or the attack of viruses, germs and bacteria. These are adhibhautika diseases. Adhidaivika diseases come due to natural calamities: floods, fires, earthquakes. One example was in Lathore. When the earthquake took place there, all the rats came out from the ground. After that, there was a plague. Adhyatmika includes the psychosomatic diseases and illnesses.

Yoga has one more idea: human nature likes to preoccupy itself by attaching itself to different things, different concepts, different beliefs, different thoughts. If the mind is not occupied in its own creations, then it will begin to look for all the problems that are happening in the body and mind. So what happens when you are free? Then suddenly you become aware that your knee is aching, and your entire attention is diverted to the knee. Now just that simple pain has created an occupation for the mind. It is not only an occupation, it is a fear that 'My God, something wrong has happened. I don't know what it is. I hope it is not serious'.

People sit in their offices for long periods, eight or ten hours, using their brain, using their mind. Then when they get up from the chair, they feel slight tension in the lower back and begin to think, 'Why am I getting this pain in my lower back? I hope it is not sciatica. I hope it is not a slipped disc. I hope it is not something serious'. Then, when the brooding begins, it is difficult to get out of that mindset. This is because today we have become very fragile. You know, when big parcels go with glass and other fragile things in them, there is a sticker that you put on them: Fragile, Handle with Care. All of us here are walking with that sticker on ourselves. We are 'Fragile, Handle with Care'.

Show me one person in this world who can claim to be absolutely and totally healthy, physically and mentally. Everyone is sick because they want to be sick! We are sick because we think we are sick. We are sick because we like the level of sickness.

Unnatural life, sedentary life, imbalanced life are the main causes of disease today in human society. Not so much the mind; the mind gets obsessed, no doubt about it, but it is the lifestyle that has to be rectified. Mind cannot compete against lifestyle. Mind has to adjust and adapt to the lifestyle, but it is the lifestyle which is the killer, and it is the lifestyle that creates a split. It is the lifestyle that creates disturbance in the homogeneity of our personality.

Health

When we look at the definition of health from the yogic perspective, we realize that health is only an expression or an outcome of a balanced, integrated and harmonious nature and personality. That's all. You can't ignore disease. It has taken a form which is equal to the 'Vishwaroopa' form of Krishna from the *Bhagavad Gita* (11:5):

*Pashya me paartha roopaani shatasho'tha sahasrashah;
Naanaavidhaani divyaani naanaavarnaakriteeni cha.*

Behold, O Arjuna, forms of Mine, by the hundreds and thousands, of different sorts, divine, and of various colours and shapes.

It is said in the *Purusha Sukta*: the purusha with a thousand heads, *sahasrashirsha purusha*; the purusha with thousands of eyes, *sahasraaksha*; the purusha with thousands of legs, *sahasrapada*.

Then there is the sutra related to disease: "Oh disease, you are also as great as God Himself, because nobody knows from where you are going to strike, and nobody knows which part of me you are going to strike. Therefore, I bow down to you with respect."

Disease has taken such a big form in humanity today, that it has become impossible to conceive of life without disease. One can conceive of life without God; that's all right, that's acceptable by becoming an atheist, a non-believer, but one can't conceive of life without disease. So who is greater, God

or disease? What do we do? How do we find a solution to these problems that surround us?

Overcoming disease

What are the causes of these diseases? There are two kinds, *adhibautika* and *adhyatmika*, which can be controlled by the individual. The third kind, *adhidaivika*, is beyond the range of individual effort.

How do we control the *adhibautika* and *adhyatmika* disease? By becoming aware of two different dimensions: personal and external. There are some basic principles which are applicable in both these methods. The first principle: change the routine of life, to begin with. This is something I have said many times, and will continue to say many times, because our physical system is not just composed of bones, muscles, organs, marrow and blood. It would be too mechanical if it were only that.

Our physical system is composed of various rhythms that control respiration, digestion and the activities of the brain. These rhythms are recognized as biorhythms, which are in harmony with the rising and setting of the sun, with different times of the day. Awareness of these biorhythms plays a vital role in obtaining health.

If you can live according to the natural biorhythm of your body, you will be healthy, but then you have to recognize the natural biorhythm of your body. If you can live according to the natural inclination of mind, you will have a disease-free mind, but then you have to recognize the natural inclination of mind and not the superimposed inclinations.

The basis of superimposed inclinations of mind is *swartha vritti*, the selfish nature; however, the basis of the natural inclination of mind is not *swartha vritti*. What is the natural desire that you have? You want to be happy, *sukha*; that is a natural desire. You want to experience peace, *shanti*; that is a natural desire. But what effort have you made to attain *shanti* or *sukha*? You think, because of your mentality, you can find *shanti* and *sukha* externally, here and there! That is not possible.

The natural inclination of mind and the natural state of the biorhythms of the body have to be recognized, and this is the first condition in yoga if you want to attain health, if you want to experience health. Secondly, you need to recognize the cause of your problem. Is it due to stress? Is it due to a sedentary lifestyle? Is it due to irregular habits? Is it because I live in a polluted atmosphere, because I drink polluted water and eat polluted food? Is it because I don't care about my body, about my needs? Is it because I tend to over-utilize my capabilities, capacities and strengths? Is it because I ignore the weak conditions that exist in my nature, in my body, in my mind or is it genetic? What is the cause? Once you have recognized the cause of the problem, you can try to work out how that problem can be overcome.

Looking for the cause

If the cause of the problem is you, and the stress and tension have affected your personal wellbeing, if the cause of the problem is lifestyle which has altered the personal wellbeing, then you can make an effort to change that. So there has to be mental realization, intellectual realization, conceptual realization of the situation and the condition in which you are living. At the same time, there has to be a selection of yogic practices which can eradicate the imbalance in each of the five koshas because each disease affects a particular kosha.

Your mental condition affects particular koshas. When you are overworked, when you have deadlines to meet, what do you do? With a one-track mind, you keep on going, forgetting about the body and the physical needs, forgetting about food, sleep and the basic needs of the body, the basic instincts of the body: *ahara* and *nidra*, food and sleep. For one day it is all right, for one month it is all right, but twenty years, thirty years, forty years? If one lives under the same stressful conditions, ignoring these natural needs of the body, ignoring the natural needs of the mind, then what can one expect, except suffering? What can one expect beyond this? So there has to be a combination of yogic practices which can help manage the imbalance created in the five koshas.

Under pressure, we experience states of *anidra*, insomnia. Under pressure, we ignore the biorhythms of the body, and these, in the long run, are not healthy conditions to which you subject yourself.

Each human being is a different human being. No two human beings are alike in the world. Every physical body has a weak and sensitive point, organ, or part. If, in my case, the lungs or heart is weak, stress will affect my lungs or heart. If my liver is weak, stress will affect my liver and digestion. If my muscular system is weak, it will affect my muscular system; I will have aches and pains. If my skeletal system is weak, it will affect that. Yes, and it happens.

The conditions to which we subject ourselves in life, due to the pressures of society, family, work and profession, affect the weakest part of our body. That is the reason why ten different people in the same situation will suffer from ten different symptoms. Somebody will have headache, somebody will faint, somebody will have a breathing problem, somebody's heart will palpitate more rapidly, somebody will sweat profusely, somebody will have stomach problems, constipation or gas. For this reason, recognizing the natural condition of your body is important, knowing which part of the body is affected more by the situations existing around you.

Similarly, you have to discover what area of the mind is disturbed more: thoughts or emotions, desires or *samskaras*. If there is some kind of barrier in the natural expression of mind, in whatever dimension of mind it may be, there will be a problem. There will be a disease: a psychological disease, an emotional disease, there will be frustration, neuroticism, schizophrenia, depression or anxiety.

Scientific proof

Once we have seen all these different problem areas of our life, we have to decide on a process which can help us maintain our health. When we look at the body and the structure of yoga, we see various techniques and practices. It is the combination of these techniques which becomes a powerful instrument to eradicate a disease.

Much research has been done in the world to see whether yoga can be used as a therapeutic science. In the course of this research, doctors and scientists have found that some cases of cancer can be helped and cured, even though it may be in the last stage. They have found that the condition of diabetes can be helped. They have found that asthmatic conditions can be helped. They have found that arthritic conditions can be helped. They have found that irregular, unnatural digestive conditions can be helped.

This research has been conducted in a big way throughout the world. Scientists and doctors have found that for the problems we are facing today, yoga can give us solutions because it looks after the needs of the different dimensions of our being, not only physical, and not only mental. Therefore, many are recommending the practise of yoga to their patients.

There have been times in various countries that for treatment, a doctor would write the alternative yogic practices which a patient can learn and perform to get well along with the name of the allopathic medicine. What does this indicate? Doctors are accepting the validity of yogic practices and yogic concepts. These yogic concepts, in reality, don't need to be validated by science because science is only a two-hundred-year-old child, whereas the experiences behind yoga come from hundreds of experimenters, spanning five or six thousand years. Definitely, it is a much more mature subject than modern medical science. Scientists recognize this, however in order to remove the garb of abstract spirituality, they conduct research to scientifically validate the efficacy of yogic practices and so yoga has come up as a therapy to help the present conditions.

Practices of yoga

What are the basic components of yoga? *Asana*, the physical postures, regulate and harmonize the physical organs, balance and synchronize the activities of physical organs. *Pranayama*, the breathing practices, increases the prana shakti by making the body, through its rigorous practices, into a magnet, a receptor, a receiver which attracts prana shakti. This is a

process that happens; nobody can deny it. In pratyahara we learn how to withdraw the mind from situations and from the environment which are creating mental dissipation, mental distraction and mental problems. *Mantras*, subtle sound vibrations, help to achieve a state of relaxation. For Indians, mantras can have a meaning, but in Western countries, people are not aware of the meanings of mantras. When they practise a mantra, they are benefited because of the sound vibrations. The frequency of the sound helps to harmonize the activities of the brain and thereby it balances the activities of the mind.

People are using meditation as therapy now. Meditation is not only used to attain enlightenment today. Instead, techniques of meditation the world over are being used to change human habits, to change attitudes, to overcome fears and personal insecurities. Is this the aim of meditation? No, this is not the aim of meditation yet it is being applied as therapy. People have seen that the state you attain at the time of meditation can help change the disturbed patterns of the personality.

Asana, pranayama, mantra, pratyahara and meditation are the five basic techniques of yoga used to remove imbalances from the body and mind. They give you the experience of health, *svasthya*, and tune your personality and your nature to act in harmony with the natural, spiritual demands of every individual.

Every individual has a spiritual demand, but we are not able to recognize it because we have never thought what spirituality can be. We have always associated spirituality with a religious precept, a religious concept, a religious belief. Spirituality is much more transcendental than the normal, worldly religious concepts and beliefs. One cannot survive without spirituality in life, whereas one can survive without religion. Just as a tree cannot grow in the absence of the seed, similarly, life cannot evolve in the absence of direction and guidance from the spirit. Therefore, we cannot ignore spirituality in our life.

Meditation fulfils a double role. It helps to overcome the quirks of the mind. It helps to overcome the dissipated nature

of mind. It helps to overcome the imposed conditionings of mind which are reflected in our habits, in our behaviour, in our attitude. The second role of meditation connects you with your spiritual nature and the moment you are connected with the spiritual nature, healing begins.

This has been the statement of the doctor who did research on cancer in 1978 in Australia. The Cancer Research Foundation was being directed by Dr Ainslie Meares. Once he had six patients on whom every kind of therapy had failed. Chemotherapy and radiotherapy failed. Surgery failed. Diet and natural therapies failed. The medical professionals had given them the recommendation to make their last will and testament as they only had six to eight months of life left before the final spread of cancer.

These patients were taught the series of pawanmuktasana practices, simple nadi shodhana pranayama and the practice of yoga nidra. They were taught the practice of ajapa japa involving the use of the mantra *So Ham* with the breath. If you have practised ajapa japa, you know that it is a practice of meditation in which you observe the breath, imagine the breath to be moving in a passage between the navel and the throat, between the navel and the eyebrow centre, between the navel and the crown of the head. As you observe the flow of breath, you are repeating a simple mantra, *So Ham*. *So* is repeated at the time of inhalation; *Ham* at the time of exhalation. Mind can become the master of matter; just the practice of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, and ajapa japa helped these patients to obtain health and to eradicate their cancer.

Health is a state of harmony. If you are trying to fight against the symptoms which are bothering you, then you will never succeed because the cause is ignored. It is like seeing the red bulb light up on the fridge which tells you that some mechanical failure is taking place so you immediately call the mechanic. The mechanic comes and checks the fridge and says, "Now everything is all right; the connection was loose. I fixed the bulb." Then again, the red bulb goes on after a few days. Again you think that something is wrong with the

fridge. You call the mechanic. This happens twenty times, thirty times, forty times. Each time, the mechanic says, “Oh, it is a loose connection.” So ultimately, what do you do? You ask the mechanic to remove the bulb so you don’t see the red bulb and you don’t become fearful that something is wrong with the fridge. But then, when something goes wrong with the fridge, there is no indication. Symptoms are helpful – but fixing the red light of the symptom is quite separate from fixing the mechanical failure which is causing the symptom!

Allergic reactions and energy loss, even cancer and AIDS are indications that there is something wrong with the system. If you are regular with the practices of yoga, you are able to immediately come to the cause of the disease or the illness and you are able to help yourself, for yoga is not a symptomatic treatment. Medical treatment today provides symptomatic relief, but yoga does not provide symptomatic relief. How can these five practices of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, ajapa japa, and meditation cure cancer which has spread through the whole body? How can the combination of asana, pranayama, mudras, bandhas and shatkriyas help people today manage problems such as AIDS? Yoga is treating the multidimensional personality; it is not trying to treat one symptom that is manifesting on the head or your feet, your spine, your lungs, in your heart or elsewhere.

For this reason, yoga has been successful in managing the physiological and psychological illnesses, and yoga has been able to provide ease by removing the disturbances – by removing the ‘dis’ from disease. Therefore, it is my humble request that you consider these points I have mentioned. And don’t wait to get sick, no.

This whole lecture was on disease and yoga, but let me tell you that even healthy people should practise yoga. Healthy people can practise yoga and it will help them. Yoga is not only for people with one foot in the grave. Yoga is for people who still have many miles to go before they rest. Therefore, give yoga a chance in your life.

Nitya Sannyasa

28 May 1998, Chitrakoot Gardens, Mumbai

Arjuna asks Lord Krishna during the battle of Mahabharata: *kim kartavyam* – “What am I to do? What is my duty?”

In the same way, our minds are full of burning questions that haunt us and sap our energies in this great but cruel, competitive city of Mumbai. Swamiji, as you know, there is hardly any difference between Mumbai and Kurukshetra. In this atmosphere of fear and insecurity, in the midst of chaos and confusion, we are forced towards astrologers, god-men, or gurus for solace. How can we put our lives in order? We look forward to you to soothe our hearts.

Once again I have the opportunity to be in Mumbai with all of you and it's a pleasure to be here and see all the friendly faces in search of some form of inner realization. The answer given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna was to become a sannyasin. Not the sannyasin who wears geru robes, not the sampradaya sannyasin who belongs to a *sampradaya* or sect, but to become a 'nitya sannyasi'. This is the aim for everyone who wishes to live like a lotus in water. In fact, this should be the aspiration of every individual: to live like a lotus in water.

The lotus grows from the mire, it floats on water and is surrounded by water, yet the flower is totally unaffected by the water. Even the leaf is totally unaffected by the water. This lotus exemplifies a nitya sannyasi. The mire, the mud, the source from where life takes birth is *prakriti*, the cosmic nature, which contains within itself cause and effect. The water represents life, and the flower represents human

consciousness. In this symbol, we see that all life is born from prakriti and surrounded by different manifestations of senses, of personal desires, ambitions and aspirations, yet consciousness is not affected by either individual or cosmic projections.

Your question is a question of identification. When we begin to identify with the world of name, form and idea, when we begin to associate with thoughts, feelings, emotions and desires, then that is the cause of human suffering and bondage. This is the statement of realized souls from time immemorial. This identification is known as *asakti*, attachment, *mamata*, super imposition of the 'I' nature in life, of 'me' and 'mine'. It is identification that makes our life or breaks our life. We suffer because of identification and we become happy because of identification.

Every individual is the creator of his own destiny. We create our own thoughts, our desires and aspirations in life. We perform actions and we are affected by the good and the bad in life. We create our own barriers and our own paths. When there is identification with thought, with sensory objects, and with ego, the natural outcome is the experience of joy, fulfilment and satisfaction – or anxiety, suffering, pain and disease.

It is impossible to avoid this situation, whether it be in Kurukshetra or whether it be in Mumbai or Munger, for we are all born from the same stock. Just because one is a sannyasi, one is not exempt from the experience of joy and suffering in life. Some people have a bit more and some people have a bit less; this is another problem altogether. This, however, remains constant: our ability to confront our own minds, to realize our own thoughts and find own path. This is the *purushartha*, freedom to attain, the effort to fulfil the four goals in the life that we have been given, in destiny.

People say that everything is predetermined. This may be the case today and I may agree with this concept or I may not. It is a question of personal experience. Maybe fifty years down the line, when I am at the evening of my life, I might say, 'Yes, everything is predestined,' but we are given the freedom

of choice, of purushartha. This choice of purushartha is what we need to use in order to progress, develop and evolve in life, yet along with this purushartha or effort, there has to be wisdom and this is where spiritual traditions come in.

One may practise yoga for health because the body is sick. One may learn techniques of relaxation and concentration because the mind is disturbed, this is a different matter. One may talk about science validating spirituality or spirituality validating science, that is a different subject. The point is: eventually, after our body has become healthy, after our mind has become balanced, what do we do? Health is necessary, there is no question about it. After all, how much can you do with *angam galitam*, *palitam mundam* as stated in *Bhaja Govindam*, verse 14:

*Angam galitam palitam mundam dashana viheenam jaatam
tundam
Vridhho yaati griheetvaa dandam tadapi na munchati
aashaapindam.*

The body has become worn out, the hair has turned grey, the mouth has become toothless, the old man moves about leaning on his staff. Even then he doesn't leave the bundle of his desires. *Bhaja Govindam* . . . seek Govinda

When the body is unable to support itself, when the mind is sick and suffering in depression, anxiety, phobia, neurosis and frustration, how much can one do? If the intellect and reasoning are clouded by problems – then not much. Therefore, it is important that we try to be healthy, it is important that we try to control and direct the faculties of our mind. When health is attained and when the vrittis of the mind are stilled, then what? Then at that time, a clear direction has to be given to one's personality and to one's effort in life. It is that effort, the free will of purushartha which can take you from human being to a superbeing.

This potential to be a superbeing is inherent in each one of us. Whether you say this superbeing is due to the awakening of kundalini or due to the grace of the Almighty, it is all the same

thing. Perceptions may be different. Our interpretation of the attainment of the state of mind may be different, but after all, it will be the same awakened mind which we are defining according to our intelligence. So what do we need to do? We need to have a concept of integrating the faculties of spirit with the faculties of mind. When the faculties of spirit are combined with mind that is known as the awakened consciousness.

The body needs nourishment to sustain itself, the mind needs stimulations to nurture itself, and the spirit needs *sanyam*, restraint or harmony, to awaken itself. We can nourish our bodies with every kind of food available on this planet. We can nourish our minds by searching for joy and happiness in the world of sense objects, but we have never come to the point of *sanyam* which can awaken our spirit. In the last stages of yoga one needs to recognize this state of *sanyam*.

Sanyam is roughly translated as restraint, but I do not believe in restraint. It is harmony and we need to recognize this state of harmony in order to awaken the spirit. This state of harmony gradually lessens the attractions and influences of the world on us by reducing our self-identification and involvement, which gives birth to suffering pain as well as experiencing pleasure and joy.

This is what Sri Krishna told Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:31): “Please remember your duty, your *dharma*; you are a warrior. Fulfil your duty.” Krishna says to Arjuna that as a person, as a warrior who is involved in the world with desires, certain aspirations and certain quests in life, he should fulfil them. You have to be a *nitya sannyasi*.

Nitya means eternal; *sannyasi* means one who uses his or her ability for the welfare, for the wellbeing, for the benefit of humanity. *Sannyasa* is of two kinds. One is a sectarian *sannyasin* which has its own rules and laws. We in *geru*, belong to the sectarian *sannyasa*. The other form of *sannyasa* is *nitya sannyasa* in which the main emphasis is on non-attachment, *anasakta bhava*. *Nitya sannyasi* or the eternal *sannyasi*, is one who is the knower, he is the *muni*, the thinker, who has the mind in control. These are the few concepts you have to understand clearly.

Due to our very ordinary quality, we are never going to realize the transcendental. Who is the knower? Don't think in terms of high-flying philosophy – that knower is one who realizes God. Nobody has seen God; nobody will see God. You won't see, I won't see, why worry about it? We are not extraordinary people. It is only the extraordinary who can have the higher experience.

We are very ordinary people. We feel hurt when we fall, we feel happy when somebody gives us a flower. The knower is not necessarily the one who has realized himself or who knows his divine nature, instead, the knower is that person who is able to apply his understanding in day-to-day situations. The knower is that person who is able to convert knowledge into action. The basis of knowledge, the basis of understanding is *viveka buddhi*. The faculty of *viveka*, knowing the right from wrong, the good from bad, the positive from the negative, makes a person a knower. The basis of knowing is *viveka*, which is translated as discriminative ability.

We know many things, but we are restricted, limited and unable to apply what we know to our actions. The problem arises because we have no faith in our knowing. Our knowing is intellectual, it is head knowledge, and it has not come down to the heart. When the knowledge moves down to the heart from the head, then it is known as wisdom. When that knowledge remains only in the head and is not applied, it is known as intellectual gymnastics: we are not able to find solutions. There is conflict and as a result we suffer, we move into a state of anxiety and frustration. For this reason, we suffer physically, which manifests itself in the form of hypertension, sleepless nights and irritation. I think you have more experience than me.

Viveka is a process of filtering the information which is already contained in the intellect. It is a process of not only filtering but also understanding how that knowledge can be applied to our actions. This knowing comes with thinking, reflecting, analyzing, contemplating. These are the states when the mind is in balance with itself, in harmony with itself, at peace with itself. Otherwise, we come back to the same state

and same problem, 'I know this, but how do I realize it?' Here we need reflection as a state of mind, we need a peaceful and harmonious mind, a balanced mind.

How to attain this peaceful, harmonious mind? There exists a system – *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *dhyana*. Please remember this carefully. Reflection is not that you sit in a chair and start thinking. Analysis is not just thinking about something, it is finding the right solution, whether it be through thought, rationality, sequential analysis, reflecting on the past and present or finding the right combination and its sources. Identifying with that process makes you the *muni*.

In our tradition, just as there is the word *yogi*, one who has perfected yoga, and the word *rishi*, signifying one who has the ability to see and have a broader perspective, similarly we have the word 'muni'. *Muni* means one who has the ability to control and has gained mastery over the mind through the practise of the yogic sadhanas of *pratyahara*, *dharana* and *dhyana*. A *muni* is one who has become firm and stable with no fluctuation of mental *vrittis*. One who has established himself or herself, and has connected the head and heart together. This person is recognized as a *nitya sannyasi*.

Krishna told Arjuna, and also told all of you, not to become *sampradaya sannyasins*, but to become *nitya sannyasins*, and the main *sadhana* is the practise of detachment. We live in this world. Fine, we are very happy about it. Socially, whatever the problems may be, we are enjoying living. We have nice flats, comfortable flats, ways to beat the heat – a fridge, cold water; ways to beat the cold – an oven, hot water, heaters; ways to beat the hardness of the bare floor – a comfortable bed; ways to pass the time, to occupy the mind – TV, radio, CD. So many different things are there, ways to beat isolation – the company of husband, wife, children, friends, relatives. Don't you agree with me? We have so many things which can keep us happy with life in this world. At the same time, if we are able to develop *anasakti bhava*, the attitude of detachment, then a totally different vision is obtained. This vision is not confined to our ego, our selfish nature. Rather, we begin to experience cosmic reality in a small way in our own life;

we begin to experience the cosmic reality, the rhythm and sanyam in our life. This process is adaptable by one and all and applicable to everyone.

How to develop non-attachment? That is always a big question. The simplest way is not by following an intricate intellectual path, but by recognizing your participation and your involvement as it is today and trying to improve upon that. There are three *kshetras*, areas: *sadvichara*, right thinking; *sadvyavahara*, right behaviour, and *satkarma*, right action. If you can manage these three in your life there will be no misery, no bondage, no sorrow. There will be freedom, evolution and mukti. So work with these three things.

At night in bed practise antar mouna and observe your thoughts, just observe them. Don't be involved with thoughts, when you become involved, the problem begins. How, why and when? For example, an actor takes a role in a film. Will that role influence him in his real life or only while he acts in the film? After he finishes his role, what happens? He will come back to his true life.

In our true life, we perform the role but we carry our sorrow and happiness along with us. It is continually influencing us. The sorrow and happiness continues in our life. The role of a father is that he should be the head of the family, but he should not go on controlling the family forever. Can a fifty-year-old father control his twenty-five-year-old son forever? This should not happen. There has to be realization of one's role and the limit of one's involvement, the limit of one's participation, and the limit of one's role in life.

If we get involved in our thoughts, we sometimes get lost in them. We are affected with behaviours that become neurotic, that become an obsession. We are so involved that, despite having the ability, we cannot obtain good results from our actions because of deep involvement. These are the three areas we need to work with and develop detachment. Learning to be detached from thoughts, whether it be through the practice of pratyahara or whether it be through your personal efforts to think the right thing, to think positive, creative and optimistic thoughts. Why do you have to think

negative, pessimistic thoughts? Don't you have the ability to think positively, in an optimistic way? That is a quality which can generate detachment from your selfish nature, from the tamasic and rajasic natures of yourself and which can stabilize you in sattwa.

It is the same with our behaviour. How do we behave? Some people say, "This person behaves in a bad manner. This person behaves in a better manner." We are responsible for our own behaviour. Don't try to rectify other people's behaviour for you will never succeed. Just make sure your behaviour does not interfere with the growth, progress and evolution of others, rather that it supports, encourages and gives others an optimistic view of life. Why are you bothered by the actions of other people? Improve your own action. Realize your own actions. It is all right to think of others. I am not saying isolate yourself from everything and from the world. You need to have a different philosophy: "Oh God, grant me the strength to change what I can, and the courage to accept what I cannot." That has to be our philosophy. Only then can we find a good balance and harmony in our life.

My parting message is: try to be a nitya sannyasi. All the answers to every kind of problem will be found the moment you take the sankalpa to be a nitya sannyasi.

Bhagavad Gita

28 May to 2 June 1998, Mumbai

Why was the *Bhagavad Gita* told to Arjuna on the battlefield? The situation was such that on the battlefield, suddenly Arjuna had to confront his own mind, which was influenced by attachment, illusion, delusion. Due to these different influences on his mind, there was confusion, so he had to ask Sri Krishna for the solution to overcome his confusion. He had to ask for help. He had to ask for help to overcome his own inner conflicts.

One of the first questions Arjuna asks Sri Krishna is in Chapter 2 (2:54):

*Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa samaadhisthasya keshava;
Sthitadheeh kim prabhaashet kimaaseeta vrajeta kim.*

What O Krishna, is the description of him who has steady wisdom and is merged in the superconscious state? How does one of steady wisdom speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?

This is the first time Arjuna actually begins to ask how to overcome his problems and what is the nature of mind. Prior to this, a simple discussion had taken place between Krishna and Arjuna in which Krishna basically said to him, “Do your duty. You are a warrior, get up and fight. Get out of this deluded state of mind.” Arjuna then asks, “How do I get out of the deluded state?” Krishna says, “By developing mental clarity, by recognizing what your duties are, by overcoming the

limited self and by reining in the activities of mind.” Arjuna says, “Well, it is very difficult. How can one ever control the mind? It is the nature of the mind to be dynamic, to be active, to associate itself with sense objects, to connect with near and dear ones and to think about them.” Krishna says, “If it is only that much, there is no problem, but if due to any association with near or dear ones, or with sense objects and the mind loses its clarity, its balance, then that is a problem and that has to be managed.”

The mind

Arjuna says, “Theoretically, I can understand what you are saying, but how does one achieve it practically? I understand the need to concentrate, the need to have mental clarity, the need to have a clear vision, the need to have an aim. I can understand what my duties are as a warrior. I can understand that I cannot be attached to anything in this world for things take birth and die, people come, people go. Our association with worldly objects, relatives, friends, near and dear ones, is just a temporary association, but at the same time there is lot of maya, there is a lot of moha. The thinking faculty is shadowed by irrationality. If the thinking faculty was not shadowed by irrationality, then at least one could think and come to a conclusion and a decision.” Krishna says, “Well that is exactly what you need to do first: recognize the nature of the mind. Without recognizing the nature of the mind, you can’t work with the mind.”

It is for this reason that the second chapter of the *Gita* is known as Samkhya Yoga. Sometimes we wonder why Sri Krishna started off on a very high-flying philosophy, thought, or idea. The word Samkhya itself defines the approach that Sri Krishna is adopting to help Arjuna. *Samkhya* is derived from the root which means ‘numbers, sequence, progression or process’. This philosophy relates to the evolution of the human mind from transcendental to gross, from its cosmic nature to its manifest nature, which is the aspect we are experiencing.

The experiences of the mind are multidimensional. The mind is transcendental. It is causal. It is subtle and it is

material, manifest or gross. As human beings, we live in the gross dimension, and we are not aware of the subtle mind, the causal mind or the transcendental mind. The level of mind associated with the world of the senses and identified with the world of the senses, in Samkhya, is known as the *ashuddha mana*, the impure mind. The mind which is pure is not identified with the world of senses; it is not a three dimensional experience. It is beyond time, space, and object. Only when the mind is influenced by time, space and object, it is recognized as the impure mind, because then there are different tracks on which mind moves. Sometimes it will look at something and desire it. Sometimes it will create its own fantasies and imaginations. Sometimes it will become introverted, sometimes it will become extroverted, and it has a life of its own.

In the transcendental dimension, mind is really alive. It is not following a track which associates itself with a name, form and idea. With the absence of a name, form and idea, in the absence of time, space and object, it will just be self-effulgent. That self-effulgent mind is known as consciousness.

Just as there is a vast body of water which we recognize as 'ocean' and into that come little tributaries of water that are recognized as streams or rivers, similarly, the tributaries of awareness which extend from the ocean of consciousness into the material dimension are four: *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*. It is the combination of these four experiences which is the 'mind experience'.

When we say 'mind', we are referring to these four experiences. When we say consciousness, we are referring to the state beyond these four experiences. That is the difference between mind and consciousness. Consciousness is the ocean and mind is the four tributaries that come out of the ocean. The senses, the *jnanendriyas* and *karmendriyas* are further extensions of these mind tributaries.

Vrittis

In order to experience consciousness, to experience the stability, the vastness, the expansiveness of the consciousness, one has to follow the stream backwards. One has to swim

upstream, let us put it that way. We have to go against the current. When we go against the current, we have to struggle with ourselves. We have to confront our own vrittis. *Vrittis* are movements. As long as we are swimming with the current, we don't experience vrittis; we are flowing with the vritti, however, the moment we begin to swim against the current, we have separated ourselves from the vritti and we are swimming upstream. Suddenly we recognize, "Oh, this is a vritti."

In normal day-to-day life, when we flow with the force, when we flow with the current of our attachment, when we think about our wife, our husband, our children, our family, our friends, and we are deeply identified and associated with them, then their pain and their pleasure, everything is part of our life. We accept that without any problem at all, but the moment we divert ourselves and try to internalize ourselves, we suddenly become aware that, 'Okay, this is a pleasurable experience, this a painful experience, this is an experience associated with my family, this is an experience associated with my friends, this is an experience associated with my relative – and I am caught in the middle. I don't know what to do, whether to accept or to reject; I feel I am being pressurized.' All these various thoughts come, which indicate that you are aware of your vritti.

In the *Yoga Sutras* (1:2) too, *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah* implies that we become aware of the vrittis because in the sutra that follows it, one word has been used – drashta. *Drashta* means somebody who is aware, who is an observer, who is the controller, and not the controlled one; somebody who is the controller of the mental processes, observer of the associations that are created in life. By becoming the observer, by becoming the drashta, it is possible to overcome the vrittis of the mind.

Manas and buddhi

Generally, we say mental vrittis but the actual words are 'chitta vritti' and chitta is not mind. Manas is mind, chitta is not mind. According to the yogic concepts, manas is the faculty of contemplation, reflection, analysis. *Manas* means *manana karana*, to think over. So when we analyze something, when

we become aware of a sequential process in something, when we reflect on something, then that is the faculty of manas.

Buddhi implies understanding, knowledge, wisdom. The opposite of *buddhi* is *buddhu*, which implies ignorant. This is not just gymnastics of words. In Sanskrit the actual word is *budh* which means 'to realize', and from *budh* comes the word *buddha*, 'the realized one', and the word *prabuddha*, a person whose intellect is awakened. Then, when we add the suffix 'i', pronounced 'ee' to the end of *budh*, it implies energy, energy and dynamism of intellect. The suffix 'i', in Sanskrit, always represents energy. In the word *stri*, female, the 'i' represents the energetic aspect. In the word *bhavani*, the 'i' is the energy aspect. In the word *buddhi*, the 'i' is the energy aspect. So in the word *buddhi*, we see the combination of energy and a conscious activity, a conscious perception, consciousness and energy combined together.

In *buddhu*, there is absence of 'i' which means there is no continuation. This is not a joke. It may sound like a joke but it is the truth. It is just a continuation of a mental process without any input of energy or other experience and we are caught up in that vicious circle of *buddhu*. Therefore, we are a *buddhu*. This is just to indicate that *buddhi*, which is the next stage after *manas*, which is a process of reflection, contemplation, analysis. It is the dimension of intellect, it is awareness of knowledge, and *buddhi* is the point in the centre which connects the higher mind with the sensory mind. It connects the *chitta* with the *indriyas*, so *chitta* comes after *buddhi*.

Chitta

What is *chitta*? It is the storehouse of impressions, the memory bank. Whatever we have experienced in this life, or in the past life, it is all stored. It is all stored inside. This has been the belief of every seer and sage, every philosophy and religion, that in the process of natural evolution, we pass through many stages of existence. In each stage of existence, we come to a final point of evolution. Even as an insect, we move towards the last point of evolution as an insect. If the final point on the scale is ten, then by the time we come to this ten, we

have gained experience, *anubhava*. That anubhava is stored as memory in chitta.

In yoga we come across the word *anushasana*. *Anu* means subtle, *shashana* means to govern, to rule, similarly in Patanjali's opening sutra (1:1) *Athah yoga anushasanam*. Yoga speaks of attaining the anubhava of life, *atma anubhava*. This anubhava, which is roughly translated as experience, what does it mean? Anu, again, means subtle, and *bhava* meaning feeling, impression, realization. So it is awareness of the subtle realization, the subtle feeling, the subtle experience which we hold inside as we move from point A to point B in evolution.

In each stage of life, from mineral to vegetable to animal to human and to divine, we accumulate anubhavas. These anubhavas are recognized by us as memories. We can even relate that to genetic information, because scientists have said that our DNA contains information which began right from creation. If we are able to identify all the information contained in a DNA structure, then maybe we will even come to realize, come to see, come to identify the first gene that was the beginning of creation.

According to yoga, that anubhava, memory, is from events that have already happened and which we have recognized. We have gone through that experience, and the memory is there. It is only a matter of exploding that memory. The chitta is the storehouse of all these bits of information that are later classified as impressions, *samskaras*; as *smriti*, memory; or as powerful impressions which have the ability to guide or control our actions, *karmas*. The useless impressions, of course there are thousands of useless impressions that we also accumulate, are recognized as fantasies.

Each one of these experiences is known as a vritti. Any activity that is happening in the field of chitta is recognized as a vritti. Samskara is a vritti, karma is a vritti, smriti is a vritti. In the *Yoga Sutras* it is said (1:5):

Vrittayah panchatayyah klistha aklistha

Modifications of mind are fivefold; they are painful or not painful.

There are five kinds of vrittis, the pleasant and the unpleasant ones: pramana, viparyaya, vikalpa, nidra, and smriti. It has specifically identified smriti, memory, as a vritti, and memory is an attribute of chitta.

Ahamkara

Then comes the fourth tributary of the ocean, ahamkara, ego or rather, self-identity: 'I exist, I live, I am' – this is the ahamkara. Ahamkara is a good thing. If ahamkara is not there, we would not be here. It is only because of ahamkara that I recognize myself as I am today. Ahamkara is recognition of an experience. Ahamkara is recognition of a state. Ahamkara is recognition of an identity, the 'I' identity with its own karma, potential impressions. Karma is a collection of potential impressions: a potential cause containing potential effects within it. These four experiences together constitute 'mind'.

When this mind takes on the form of a body and is contained in a body, then it utilizes the expressions of the senses to survive in this material world. At that time, it is under the influence of the three gunas, and when it is under the influence of three gunas, the expressions of the mind become different.

For example, when ahamkara is influenced by tamoguna, then ahamkara is recognized as arrogance; it is a self-centred condition and ahamkara is recognized as a negative state of life. When buddhi is coloured by tamoguna, the buddhi is recognized as lethargic and one feels, 'I don't agree with anybody else. I am convinced of my belief, and I am not willing to change it for anything'. When manas is controlled by tamoguna, then pessimistic attitudes, wrong thinking, negative thinking occurs. The only state of mind which is not influenced by tamoguna is chitta, for chitta is not an activity of mind, it is a storehouse of memory.

When rajoguna affects the ahamkara, we become egoistic, have a superiority complex, arrogance, and an over-developed self-image. When rajoguna affects buddhi, buddhi becomes very dynamic and it begins to receive, imbibe every type of information in the world, but the motive is selfish. When

manas is affected by rajoguna, there is a lot of dissipation and distraction; there is no focus. We see this in little children. They are so active, bubbling with energy, it is the rajoguna influence over the mind, strictly speaking in the traditional sense.

When sattwaguna is active and ahamkara is under the influence of sattwaguna, then there is the ability to let go, to surrender. There is the realization that 'I am only an extension of the divine, nothing more than that'. At that time the thinking pattern changes; it is more balanced, it is more harmonious. In this way, we can see these influences of the gunas on the manifest mind.

In life, we fluctuate between tamas and rajas. Sattwa comes only with awareness. The natural expression of mind is tamasic, and when we try to improve ourselves, when we try to change ourselves, then the natural expression of mind is rajasic. Sattwa is not a natural expression of mind, it is too pure. This material world does not allow that purity to manifest naturally. So in this world we fluctuate between tamas and rajas. It is the play of tamas and rajas on manas, buddhi, chitta, and ahamkara which connects and disconnects us from different people, from different objects. It is the fluctuation of tamas and rajas which gives us the experience of *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction and repulsion, pleasure and pain.

Spiritual traditions have maintained that in order to develop sattwa, we need to practise and live spiritual disciplines. In order to deal with the intensity of the gunas there are different techniques. If tamoguna is predominant, and we need to practise some methods to transform that tamoguna into sattwa, then austerity has to be practised, tapasya. If rajoguna is predominant, and we want to convert that into sattwa, then we need to practise yamas and niyamas such as ahimsa or aparigraha just to change the quality of rajoguna into sattwa.

All the various traditions that exist in the world have followed these two paths. One, an extreme path of austerity and hardship, in which we may have to fast, we may have to be harsh with our body, we may have to expose our body to the

elements – just to control the mind and overcome the natural inclinations of *tamas* and pleasure in life. The other path is much simpler than that: by becoming aware, we change the various components of our personality, one by one.

Awareness

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the second path has been followed by Sri Krishna, because he knew Arjuna could not renounce the battlefield to go to the forest to practise austerities. An instant result is expected out of a battle: either you die or the enemy dies. What can be more instant than this? Krishna saw that Arjuna was going through mental conflict because of his associations; it is not that he was a coward, no. Many times in the past, Arjuna had single-handedly overcome the Kauravas. During the last year, the thirteenth year of exile when the Pandavas were residing at Virat's palace, the Kauravas, on speculation, attacked the kingdom of Virat. Arjuna's four brothers went to fight off the army, and in their absence, all the Kauravas including Bhishma, Drona and Karna came and robbed the kingdom of cows. At that time Arjuna was in the guise of a woman. Single-handedly he fought everyone, put them all to sleep, took away their clothes and left them naked, lying on the battlefield.

Couldn't he have done the same thing again here? Of course he could have. However, attachment, *asakti*, was more this time because now this was not going to be just fun and games. Now, he had to face the reality that somebody had to die. Now the purpose was to kill and destroy, not to defend, and that was the cause of his mental conflict. He saw everybody lined up, ready to kill each other, and it was a big shock to his system. He said, "If everybody is going to die, then what will happen to society? Who is going to suffer and who is going to enjoy? There can be no victory, there can be only loss. This war is a big mistake." He said to Krishna, "You know, I don't think this is right." (1:32):

*Na kaankshe vijayam krishna na cha raajyam sukhaani cha;
Kim no raajyena govinda kim bhogairjeevitena vaa.*

I desire not victory, O Krishna, nor kingdom, nor pleasures. Of what avail is dominion to us, O Krishna, or pleasures or even life?

If we win, we will have lost everything and everyone, we will have lost all our friends and family members. Even if we are victorious in war, we shall lose. We will be the losers. If we die, then the other side is also going to feel the same. With whom will Duryodhana fight? Against whom will he take out his aggression? If we are not there, he will go into depression. This mass destruction that is going to take place, who is going to be responsible for that? What will happen to human society? We will go back to the edge of barbarism because all the social structures will be destroyed; there won't be any industry, there won't be any trade and commerce. Society will have to again rise from the ashes of the past civilization. All our achievements and attainments will be useless, worthless.

Sri Krishna sees the reason for Arjuna's despondency, he sees the validity of Arjuna's lethargy. Krishna sees the reason behind Arjuna's thinking and agrees with it. He says, "Yes, but you can't help it because the situation is such that destruction is going to happen, whether with a war or without a war. Destruction you cannot avoid, so it is better to go out with a bang and not a whimper. No, you have to fight and you also need to have yourself under control." Arjuna says, "How do I get myself under control, Krishna? You can see my logic and I can understand your logic, but I don't think that we are speaking the same language."

Krishna replies, "No, we are speaking the same language, but you are looking it from that side; I'm looking at it from this side. You think that you will be the cause of destruction. You think that you will be the cause of loss and change, but Arjuna, remember that even if you decide not to fight and you run away from the battlefield, war is going to take place; maybe not in Kurukshetra but it will take place in Hastinapur. Right now the war is between equals: you are a warrior, they are warriors, but if the war happens in Hastinapur, that fight will not be between equals. That will be between civilians

and the royalty, and the results will be devastating so it is better that war should be between equals and give a chance to civilians. If you win, then you have the earth to rule, and if you die then you have heaven. However, before you fight, remove the doubts from your mind, remove the conflicts from inside, which are coming up because of your associations with people.”

Steady wisdom and samadhi

Then Arjuna says to Krishna, “So can you tell me, what is a stable mind?” This is the first question of the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:54):

*Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa samaadhisthasya keshava;
Sthitadheeh kim prabhaashet kimaaseeta vrajeta kim.*

What O Krishna, is the description of him who has steady wisdom and is merged in the superconscious state? How does one of steady wisdom speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?

When asking about one who has steady wisdom, Arjuna uses two words: ‘sthitaprajna’ and ‘samadhi’. *Samadhi* means ‘merging with the superconscious state’. *Sthitaprajna* means ‘steady wisdom’. This is a cryptic question. Arjuna was a knower of many, many shastras. He was a pandit. He was not an ignorant warrior, therefore his questions are clear, precise and one-pointed. He says to Krishna that steady wisdom, sthitaprajna, is a quality not everybody can have. “I recognize that I am under delusion. I’m in depression. I’m suffering because of my attachments. I know that it is wrong because I am escaping or trying to run away from my duty, my *kartavya*, from my dharma as a warrior. I know that I need to have a stable mind. But how to develop that stable mind?

“It is a different matter when we try to achieve a stable mind in normal conditions of life, when we are not confronted or surrounded by problems, but it is very difficult to have a stable mind when we are involved in a problem. So what is the definition of stable mind? How can one attain that

stable mind? And if you have that stable mind, does the consciousness merge with the higher Self and create a distance between your material life and spiritual life? Or are you able to function with that higher consciousness in this life, in this situation? Tell me, how does that person function in life? How does that person walk in life? How does that person think in life, who has a stable mind, and who has attained samadhi, having merged with higher consciousness?”

There are two concepts here: sthitaprajna and samadhi, and the question of Arjuna revolves around these two words. *Sthita* means one who is still, firmly established or grounded. Prajna is not knowledge, prajna is not understanding; *prajna* means wisdom. The question of Arjuna is: “What are the symptoms of a person who has achieved steadiness of mind, who is not subject to the forces of emotions, desires, attachments or repulsions, but who is aware, who is alert and who is established in viveka buddhi?” Prajna also indicates *viveka buddhi*, the faculty of discrimination. Prajna indicates awareness. In the absence of awareness, knowledge has no meaning. In the absence of awareness, understanding has no purpose. In the absence of awareness, there is no wisdom. So, how is this stillness of mind to be achieved? This is the question of Arjuna.

He poses another question, by using the word ‘samadhi’. Samadhi, in our understanding today, means a deep state of meditation, but in the context of this question, samadhi means to hold on to a state of consciousness. The word samadhi is composed of two words: sama plus dhi. The root *dhi*, in Sanskrit means ‘to hold’, ‘to retain’. *Sama*, in Sanskrit means ‘equality’, ‘balance’, like the word *samabhava*, a balanced attitude. Samadhi here doesn’t indicate the process of self-realization, rather it indicates that the person with a stable mind, an unfluctuating mind, attains the state of samadhi, in which there is total control over the mental activities and performances. There is harmony, there is balance, and we are able to retain that state, even when we are extroverted. Even in the state of activity, sensory activity, wakeful activity, *jagrit* activity, we are able to maintain the

balance, we are able to hold the state of balance. We are the master of our mind. This is the meaning of the word samadhi in this context.

How to attain this, is the question of Arjuna. What are the symptoms of a person who has attained it? How does that person move? How does that person talk? How does that person relate to the world around him? Here, we will discover another idea: that in order to control the mind, in order to control the thoughts, in order to control or transcend our nature, we do not have to isolate ourselves from the world. Generally, we believe that if we want mental peace, then it is better to avoid situations which create disturbance. If we want mental peace, then it is better that we isolate ourselves from the world, even if it is for a short time; however, that is not the concept conveyed in spiritual traditions.

When we are able to hold the mind and do not allow the energies of mind to be dissipated or distracted, when we are in control of ourselves, when we are balanced, then at that time, this mental state alters the mode of action. We can see two people walking on the road. One we recognize to be a disturbed person, the other we recognize to be a relaxed person. Is it not so? If we observe two people, one who is totally disturbed, walking on the road, and one who is totally relaxed, walking on the road, we can easily distinguish between the two. How they move, how they look, their body posture; all these can indicate a person who is relaxed and a person who is tense. So when such mundane mental conditions are reflected in our day-to-day activities, what are the mental conditions which are seen reflected in a person who has attained this state of sthitaprajna and samadhi? In answer to this, Krishna says, (2:55-57):

*Prajahaati yadaa kaamaansarvaanpaartha manogataan;
Aatmanyevaatmanaa tushtah sthitaprajnastadochyate.*

When a man completely casts off, O Arjuna, all the desires of the mind and is satisfied in the Self, by the Self, then he is said to be one of steady wisdom. (2:55)

*Duhkhashvanudvignamanaah sukheshu vigatasprihah;
Veetaraagabhayakrodhah sthitadheermuniruchyate.*

He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after pleasures, and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage of steady wisdom. (2:56)

*Yah sarvatraanabhisnehastattatpraapya shubhaashubham;
Naabhinandati na dveshti tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.*

He who is everywhere without attachment, on meeting with anything good or bad, who neither rejoices nor hates, his wisdom is fixed. (2:57)

In sloka 55, Krishna says to Arjuna, “When you are able to renounce your desires and you are not a slave to your desires; when you are content, happy and satisfied in yourself, then that is an indication of your having attained steady wisdom, steadiness of mind.” So the first indication given is to desires and the second, to the feeling of contentment. Contentment and desires are the two sides of the same coin. If we attain what we desire, we are content; if we do not attain what we desire, we are unhappy therefore, contentment and desire both go together, and it is the desire, according to yogic and other traditions, that creates havoc in one’s life.

Renunciation and desires

Desire in itself is not bad. One should have desire because desire is the spice of life. Life without desires is a bland life; it has a bland taste. It is not necessary that every desire be renounced or overcome; instead we have to recognize the quality of the desire and we have to recognize the intensity of the desire. We also have to be aware of the result that we are going to have if that desire is fulfilled, and we have to disassociate our personal involvement from the desire. When there is personal involvement with a desire, then the mind is not steady; it moves with the force of the desire, with the current of the desire, and that desire can become an obsession. The more we move with the current of the desire, with the force of the desire, the more it becomes an

obsession, and we will not be able to maintain our mental balance.

When desire, *kamana*, becomes an obsessive desire, it is known as *vasana*. The word Krishna has used here is *kamana*. *Kam* means ‘an activity’, *karya*. The activity in which our passions are involved is known as *kamana*. When are passions involved? When we identify with that activity. When we say, ‘this person works very passionately’ it means this person has a one-track mind. A deep association with the process of action and desire is known as *kamana*. However, when the same thing takes possession of our being and becomes a *vritti*, and we are not able to isolate ourselves from that desire, it keeps on going through the mind every second in the form of thought, in the form of dream or in the form of anxiety, then it becomes a *vasana*. This is one of the mental diseases too, termed as neurotic or obsessive-compulsive behaviour. At that moment, all we are looking for is a sense of fulfilment, achievement, to get out from that whirlpool, which is sucking us in and creating disturbance, conflict, suffering. At that moment all we want is to be happy. Recognizing, realizing, “I have done what I needed to do, and I have achieved it, I have attained it.”

When Sri Krishna says, “There has to be renunciation of desire,” he is implying that we need to become aware of the desire first. We can’t renounce anything without knowing that it exists. First, we have to know that it is there. Then we have to know how intense, strong, powerful that particular experience, thought or desire is. Then we have to work out whether it is a valid desire or just a selfish desire. Is that desire or thought associated with ego? Is that desire or thought associated with a need? Is that desire or thought associated with a weakness of my nature? Is it relevant in my present condition, in my present situation? This process of analysis, *jnana*, should be there before taking the decision to renounce the desire. *Jnana* precedes *tyaga*, knowledge precedes renunciation.

Niyamas and contentment

Then Krishna says, 'Contentment'. This is a *niyama*, perfection of certain disciplines in life. In raja yoga, Sage Patanjali speaks of five niyamas: *shaucha*, purity of body and mind, the physical personality and the mental personality; *santosha*, contentment; *tapas*, austerity; *swadhyaya*, self-study; and *Ishwara pranidhana*, belief in God.

Shaucha is the state of purity. Santosha is a state of happy mind. Tapas, tapasya, austerity, is an effort of a mind trying to become stable. Swadhyaya is developing the understanding of one's interaction in life, in society, with oneself. Ishwara pranidhana is a state of knowing that 'I am only a medium. I am only an instrument which is being played. I am not the performer. I am not the enjoyer'. How can we be the performer in relation to cosmic time? What is a life span of eighty years or even one hundred years, in the span of infinity? It is like a grain of sand in the ocean. Does one grain of sand have any meaning in the ocean? No it doesn't. In this short period, we make ourselves the centre of the universe and we become indispensable to ourselves, and we make sure that other people also understand that we are indispensable.

If it was only this much, it would be all right but we also try to make sure that God understands that we are indispensable. Ishwara pranidhana is knowing that I am not the performer. I do my duty and there is no question that I will leave my duties; however, while I fulfil my duties, obligations and commitments, I shall strive to make it creative, constructive and beneficial for everyone concerned. I will personally have no expectation either of a garland of flowers or a garland of shoes. It is a state of letting go, surrendering, opening up.

These are the five niyamas which raja yoga says one must cultivate in life. When Sri Krishna mentions contentment, he is referring to these niyamas which are the foundation of yoga. At that time people were not as health-conscious as we are today, because they were not as sick as we are today. So he said for the society at that time, "All right, if you want to improve

yourself, perfect the yamas and niyamas to begin with. Change your attitude, your perception towards life, and then practise asanas.” This was not to feel fit every morning, but asanas can prepare the body to experience higher meditative states. Therefore, in most of the yogic literature, the asanas which have been described are the meditative asanas: sukhasana, siddhasana, padmasana, vajrasana; dynamic asanas have not been described because the need was not felt.

It was only at the time of the hatha yogis like Sage Gorakhnath, who wrote the *Goraksha Samhita*; or Swatmarama, who wrote the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*; or Sage Gheranda, who wrote the *Gheranda Samhita*, when people were experiencing the initial levels of stress and tension, having stomach problems, back problems and respiratory problems, that hatha yoga books mentioned that the practices of mayurasana or ardha matsyendrasana or bhujangasana are beneficial for this and that.

Our own book, *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* is full of benefits and precautions, limitations and breathing instructions. Why? Because that is the need of society today. Yamas and niyamas are attitudes to be adopted to begin the spiritual journey and in different ages, at different times, according to the need, one particular subject is highlighted. In today’s age, asana is highlighted, but that does not reduce the need to perfect the other disciplines. One has to perfect santosha; contentment is a quality which needs to be cultivated. In fact, there are certain things that everybody needs to cultivate.

Working on yourself

I’ll give you one homework. Make a private list. Don’t show it to anybody, but objectively make a list of all the weaknesses and bad qualities you may have. Don’t show it to anybody. Not even your wife or husband. It’s only for your eyes. Then make a list of all the good qualities and strengths that you have. Objectively, no matter to what degree they may be. Even if it is one percent, two percent, three percent, put it down on paper – and you will be and become that.

Then try to see the areas with which you need to work. Pick up one good quality to cultivate more each month, and pick up one quality to transcend, a bad quality to overcome each month. If, in one year, you can transform, you can change twelve bad qualities and you can cultivate twelve good qualities, I will be hopeful that yes, the world can change.

This is also how contentment should be developed. You should remind yourself again and again, whenever you find yourself getting in a train of thought and you begin to feel anxious, irritated or agitated about it, then at that moment, step back from your involvement and say, “I will, for five minutes, not be involved in this train of desire. I will observe its reaction on my mind, on my body, and manage those reactions.” This is a method. This is a sadhana to develop stability of mind. Contentment and reduction of desire are the first symptoms of a person who has attained steady wisdom, a balanced mind.

In the second sloka (2:56), Krishna says, “If you are not agitated in suffering and if you are not attached to pleasures, and if within you, attachment, fear, and anger are destroyed, then you are a person with steady wisdom.” We need to have a philosophy in life, and that philosophy in life should not be to reject pain and suffering. Paramahamsaji has said many times, “Pleasure is a visitor in our life and pain is a permanent companion.” Yet we fight against the permanent companion.

Suffering is our permanent companion, and pleasure is a temporary visitor. What do we need to do? Instead of fighting against suffering, instead of trying to permanently retain the temporary visitor in our home, why can’t we come to an agreement with suffering and pain? The moment we are able to accept suffering, we won’t recognize suffering as suffering. The moment we come to terms with suffering, with pain, we will recognize them as a pleasant experience; a learning experience, a growing experience.

This is what Krishna is indicating here: if you are not disturbed by pain and suffering, and if you are not elated with the arrival of pleasure, and you are able to remain balanced, that means you have made friends with yourself. You have

made friends with your expectations. You have come to an agreement with yourself that, “Okay, I will not reject; rather, I will accept. I will not reject their existence; I will accept it.” If you are able to develop this kind of attitude, if you are able to develop this kind of philosophy, then attachment, fear and anger are destroyed. Attachment, fear and anger are linked with suffering and pleasure. Pleasure creates attachment; pain creates fear. If you are not able to attain what you wish, it creates anger. If you are not able to avoid what you want to avoid, it will create anger, frustration. So fear, anger and attachment are associated with suffering and pleasure.

In meditation, every day, try to work out, “Am I angry about something today? Did I become irritated today? Did I feel insecure today? Did I have any fears today?” If the answer is affirmative, then find out the cause of that fear, that anger, that insecurity: whether it was the family, whether it was the finances, whether it was your health, whether it was your mental state, whether it was a worry from your profession. Think about it in your meditation, “Was there a different way to manage the situation, and will I be able to manage it differently when the same situation comes up again next time?” Be optimistic, be positive in your analysis then you won’t have any problems. If you become pessimistic, and if you are negative in your approach, you will have to work harder with yourself.

When Krishna says, “A person with a balanced mind is able to remain harmonious in conditions of pain and suffering, and remain balanced in situations from which one can derive pleasure and happiness. That person is able to control the three common expressions of mind.” The three common expressions of mind are attachment, fear and anger.

Pratyahara

Then in the following sloka (2:57), Krishna says, “He who is everywhere without attachment, on meeting with anything good or bad, who neither rejoices nor hates, his wisdom is fixed.” He is at equal ease with the auspicious and the inauspicious, *shubha* and *ashubha*. This is a continuation of the

previous statement, that there comes a time in the process of sadhana that we are able to recognize our involvement and our connection with the auspicious and the inauspicious. Auspicious, shubha, and inauspicious, ashubha are conditions which influence us and which are around us. With a balanced mind it is possible to recognize such conditions and manage both, without rejecting any bad, without craving for any good.

At that moment Arjuna says to Krishna, “Please, now you are talking about something which is way beyond my mind. Can you give me a practical indication of how I can experience the state of sthitaprajna, steady wisdom?” And Krishna says, “Yes, until now I was explaining to you the theory and the philosophy behind it. Now I will tell you the practice.” (2:58, 2:61)

*Yadaa samharate chaayam koormo'ngaaneeva sarvashah;
Indriyaaneendriyaarthebhyastasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.*

When one can withdraw the senses from association with objects, as a tortoise withdraws its limbs from external danger, then one is firmly fixed on the path towards wisdom. (2:58)

*Taani sarvaani samyamya yukta aaseeta matparah;
Vashe hi yasyendriyaani tasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.*

Having restrained them all, he should sit steadfast, intent on Me; his wisdom is steady whose senses are under control. (2:61)

Can you tell what Krishna is talking about here? Yes, the subject is pratyahara. He says to Arjuna, “Look, you can achieve this steadiness of mind and to achieve that, you need to follow a process. That process is pratyahara. Just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into the shell, similarly Arjuna, you have to withdraw your awareness from the senses and internalize it. You have to ensure that you are able to become the ruler of your senses and not the slave of your senses, and you have to ensure that you are able to identify with the spirit, with your inner nature. Arjuna, I can assure you that

the person who is able to control their senses attains steady wisdom.”

In these slokas, the theory and the practice of pratyahara has been defined. In pratyahara, we say, “Withdraw your attention from the world around you and focus inside on a symbol, an image, a mantra, or on the breath and become aware of that process of concentration.” If we are able to retain the state of concentration for ten minutes or fifteen minutes, or even five minutes, immediately we will experience wellbeing of the mind. I think it is a common experience that after meditation we feel as if a great burden has been removed. After meditation we feel light, we feel fresh, we feel as if we have gained something. Why does this happen? It happens because of the pratyahara state. When we are connected with the senses and with sense objects, and they are pulling us from all sides, we are being stretched. If somebody ties ropes to our body, on the two arms, the two legs and on the head, and each rope is pulled from a different direction, what will be our condition? It is that state of life which we live every day. And it is a torture.

If we want to relax, then what do we have to do? Cut the rope; remove the rope. We can still lie sprawled in shavasana, but the pull is not there anymore. Immediately the mind relaxes, the body relaxes. As soon as the body relaxes, the mind relaxes, there is focus, there is concentration. In yoga nidra as an example, what do we do? Sometimes people say, “How can I relax in yoga nidra if my mind is kept busy all the time?” Then we have to explain to them that yes, in yoga nidra we keep the mind busy, like in normal life. The only difference is that in normal life we are not aware of where the mind is going. In yoga nidra we are aware of where the mind is going because we are making it move: right hand thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, palm, back of the hand, wrist, lower arm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, armpit . . . It is an activity, isn’t it? Yet, we feel relaxed. We have to visualize: see the moon, see the sun, see the sky, clouds, flowers, people, children – it is an activity. It is activation of the mind, yet we relax, because in this activity

of the mind, when we are able to give it a focus, when we are able to give a direction, tensions are released. So when we are focusing in pratyahara on our inner self, at that time disconnection from the sensorial world connects us with the source of wisdom inside. That is the state of pratyahara, which follows a natural sequence.

The mind and the world of the senses

Sri Krishna was telling Arjuna the principles and practices of pratyahara when Arjuna posed a question, “Can you describe how the mind becomes involved with the world of senses, with the material world?” In answer to this question, Krishna says in the following slokas of Chapter 2 (2:62–63):

*Dhyaayato vishayaanpumsah sangasteshoopajaayate;
Sangaatsanjaayate kaamah kaamaatkrodho'bhijaayate.*

When a man thinks of the objects, attachment to them arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire (unfulfilled) anger arises.

*Krodhaadbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah;
Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaatpranashyati.*

From anger comes delusion; from delusion, the loss of memory; from loss of memory, the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination, he perishes.

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that in the world, it is the contact between the senses and the sense objects which becomes the cause of attachment. When the eyes see something pleasant they are attracted to it. When the ears hear something pleasant, they are attracted to it. When the nose smells something pleasant, the nose attracts us to it. When we touch something pleasant, we are attracted to it. So it is the contact of senses with the sense objects which creates attachment. This attachment is due to the search for experiencing something nice, possessing something nice, becoming something. This is the birth of desire, desire in the material world. When we

are attached to something, then desire is born, and when we are unable to fulfil that desire, then frustration comes.

Krishna is talking of a sequence. He is talking about how the mind moves in the material world. So the object of desire creates attachment then desire, and unfulfilled desire creates frustration and anger, and then from anger comes delusion, *krodhaadbhavati sammohah*. When we are angry, there is loss of mental clarity, the birth of an obsessive nature. The loss of mental clarity plus the birth of the obsessive nature is the cause of mental delusions, *mudha bhava*. With mental delusions, comes *sammohaatsmritivibhramah*, loss of memory. *Smriti* is usually translated as memory, but here, *smriti* means knowledge. After all, knowledge within us is stored in the form of memory. In other words, one can also say that memory is the storehouse of the impressions of knowledge, the storehouse of impressions of buddhi, and we derive information from that knowledge bank which is known as *smriti*, memory.

In the state of delusion, access to this knowledge is not there and therefore, even in day-to-day situations, we find that despite knowing many things, we act, we think and behave in the opposite way. Despite knowing what is, what should be, what is right and what is wrong, we are not able to use the experience which we have already gained. We commit mistakes, and we make the same mistakes again and again. It says *smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho*, that with the loss of memory, of knowledge, there is destruction of buddhi, destruction of jnana shakti, there is separation between ourselves and wisdom. Once this separation takes place, *buddhinaashaatpranashyati*, at that time, there is only death. Death here does not mean physical death. Death here means death of the human nature, disconnection from the spirit, disconnection from the mind, disconnection from wisdom, *viveka*. This is the circle of the material world.

A yogi is that person who is aware of this sequence, who is aware of this process of involvement. A sadhaka is that person who can step back and observe these processes, who can practise pratyahara by realizing the movement, the flow

of one stage into the next, and by separating one's self from the pulls, from the attractions of these different stages.

The culmination of pratyahara

So Arjuna says to Krishna, "Well, you have described how the mind becomes associated and attached to the material world. I can understand that the practice you have described of pratyahara will help me realize my follies, but what will be the ultimate attainment of pratyahara?" In reply to that Krishna says in the following slokas (2:64–65, 2:68, 2:71–72):

*Raagadveshaviyuktaistu vishayaanindriyaishcharan;
Aatmavashyairvidheyaatmaa prasaadamadhigachchhati.*

But the self-controlled man, moving among the objects with the senses under restraint, and free from attraction and repulsion, he attains to peace. (2:64)

*Prasaade sarvaduhkhaanaam haanirasyopajaayate;
Prasannachetaso hyaashu buddhih paryavatishtate.*

In that peace, all pains are destroyed for the intellect of the tranquil-minded soon becomes steady. (2:65)

*Tasmaadyasya mahaabaaho nigriheetaani sarvashah;
Indriyaaneendriyaarthebhyastasya prajnaa pratishthitaa.*

Therefore, O mighty-armed Arjuna, his knowledge is steady, whose senses are completely restrained from sense objects. (2:68)

*Vihaaya kaamaanyah sarvaanpumaamshcharati nihsprisah
Nirmamo nirahankaarah sa shantimadhigachchati.*

That man attains peace who, abandoning all desires, moves about without longing, without the sense of mine, and without egoism. (2:71)

*Eshaa braahmee sthithi paartha nainaam praapya vimuhyati;
Sthitvaasyaamantakaale'pi brahmanirvaanamrichchhati.*

This is the Brahmic state, the eternal state, O son of Partha. Attaining to this no one is deluded. Being established

therein, even at the end of life, one attains to oneness with Brahman. (2:72)

Krishna says to Arjuna, “When you are in control of your mental faculties and mental processes, when you are able to restrain the senses, then you experience happiness and peace. This is the benefit of *pratyahara*.” The yogic concepts have emphasized restraining the senses. For what reason? As long as we are in the world, our senses and our mind need to interact in the world; they can’t be isolated, but this interaction has to be a *sattwic* interaction.

Sattwic interaction compared to *tamasic* or *rajasic* involvement in the material world implies understanding, knowledge and awareness which has to come alive in every *sadhaka*, in every aspirant. A *sadhaka* must have *jnana* and not *ajnana*. One should be knowledgeable about one’s nature, one’s needs, one’s efforts. This state of knowledge, this realization of *jnana* with *karma*, knowledge combined with action, is *sattwic* involvement in the world.

Tamasic involvement in the world is the absence of knowledge from action. When we act without thinking or when we think for fulfilment of personal aspirations and desires without thinking about what is right and what can be right, then this creates a different kind of impression, a different kind of *samskara* in the mind. It creates a particular kind of *vritti*. Anger is a *vritti*. Frustration is a *vritti*. A *vritti* is a vortex, a whirlpool which has the strength to suck us in. If action is without knowledge; if one’s desire is for the fulfilment of a personal, selfish idea; if thought is a self-centred thought, then a *tamasic* or *rajasic* *vritti* is being created.

Krishna again and again emphasizes to Arjuna that he has to combine the faculty of observation and awareness with knowledge and action. This has to be the effort of every aspirant who wishes to transcend the limitations of life, who wishes to improve the conditions of life. It is only by realizing knowledge and action together, by developing awareness of our participation, interaction and involvement in the material world, that we will find peace and happiness. This is the

aim of pratyahara. It is the person who is able to control the activity of the senses, who has steady wisdom, and it is only that person who has steady wisdom. The person who is able to renounce personal identification with desires and is able to be free from the negative effects of the ego, it is only that person who attains peace.

Pratyahara – return to the source

Earlier, I described the difference between mind and consciousness, and in order to explain this, I gave the example of the ocean and the four tributaries of the ocean. In pratyahara, instead of going away from the ocean and following a particular tributary away from the ocean, we follow the same tributary back to the ocean. Manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara are the four streams which lead out of the ocean into the material world. When we reverse the flow so that we are not moving into the material world, but are coming back to the source, the ocean, then the vrittis of mind change. The entire raja yoga philosophy is based on this principle, and it is for this specific reason that Patanjali has said control of vritti should be and is, the purpose of yoga. Maybe even Sage Patanjali had this example of the ocean and the rivers in mind.

Control of the *samsaric* vritti, the material vrittis, the sensorial vrittis and the sensual vrittis gives birth to another vritti which is known as brahmi vritti. *Brahmi* vritti or the brahmi state, represents the mind which is seeking its source. There are many vrittis. Vrittis are strong impressions, vrittis are the obsessive nature of mind. When we are controlling the vrittis through whatever method possible – whether it be through meditation, prayer, mantra japa or by isolating ourselves from the world – when we are trying to find peace within ourselves we are, in fact, trying to control a vritti which is dominant.

When we are frustrated and angry and realize, ‘I am frustrated and angry’, and retire to a room to cool down, what are we trying to do? We are trying to control that agitated vritti. When we are under the influence of extreme fear and realize that we are experiencing fear and withdraw to a room

and try to control that fear, what are we trying to do? We are trying to change that fear vritti. When we try to attain peace in meditation, when we try to have some form of transcendental experience, divine experience or good experience, we are changing the normal vritti by developing a new vritti which represents peace, *shanti*, which represents bliss, *ananda*. This peaceful state of mind, this quiet state of mind is known, in yogic terminology, as the brahmi vritti.

The word brahmi has a relationship with the word Brahman. Brahman is not the personal God, Brahman is not the impersonal God, Brahman is a state of mind in which the divisions between time, space and object disappear, and we are able to experience continuity of life. The word *Brahman* itself means expansion, and when we say brahmi vritti, it means the expanding vritti, the expanding consciousness, the transforming consciousness. This transforming consciousness, expanding consciousness, is attained by those who are able to restrain the obsessive-compulsive involvement of the senses with the world. This peaceful and blissful state of mind is achieved by those who are able to redirect their attention by standing back from the day-to-day experiences of the senses and mind, and by diverting the awareness from outside to inside.

Understanding the thought process

According to Sri Krishna, these are the benefits of pratyahara. One of the basic techniques of pratyahara is knowledge or realization of the human thought process. When we speak of desire, we are speaking of a condition of mind. When we speak of anger we are speaking of a condition of mind. When we speak of fear, we are speaking of a condition of mind. But that condition of mind comes with the help of thoughts. Frustration, anger, hatred, jealousy, greed and attachment are different conditions of mind. They are not evolving conditions; they are fixed conditions. Anger does not evolve into something else, fear does not evolve into something else, hatred does not change into something else, jealousy does not change into something else. They are fixed.

Then what is it that changes the normal state of mind into a condition? Thought. It is the thought, the *vichara*, which alters the normal state of mind and which creates a condition within the mind.

Thought is subject to ahamkara, the influences of ego. Thought is subject to the influences of buddhi. Thought is subject to the impressions of chitta. Thought is subject to the tamoguna and the rajoguna that exist in our nature. So, control of thoughts is the first step in pratyahara.

It is thought which guides the sense perceptions. It is the thought that involves us with a particular condition and we then start thinking about it, brooding about it and worrying about it. When thoughts are unhealthy thoughts, we become a bonsai human being, a small human being. When thoughts are healthy thoughts then we become a giant human being, a superbeing.

Thoughts are recognized to be the expressions of a limited mind, a sick mind, or a healthy mind, an expansive mind. If we can manage our thoughts, then without any effort we will notice that transformations begin to take place in our life. Just try for one day. Have good thoughts, optimistic thoughts, positive thoughts, and you will enjoy that day of your life the most. Make a list of how many good thoughts you have during the day, then you will know how many bad thoughts come naturally. Make a list of positive thoughts that come to you in one day and you will know that other thoughts are all negative, critical, hypocritical and hypothetical.

Thought control

Yoga has given lot of emphasis to control of thought. That is a statement to indicate a process, to indicate an achievement. Yoga does not say control your desires. Yoga does not say control your anger. How does one control anger or hatred? How does one control jealousy? How does one control frustration? If we want to stop a person from running away we have to grab hold of something, either the hand or the neck or the shirt. So when the mind is running, we can't tackle the mind itself. We have to grab hold of something which is an

extension of the mind, and the most immediate thing that comes to our knowledge are the thoughts.

We know of the practice of antar mouna. It is a technique of pratyahara. In antar mouna, first you have to become aware of the thought processes. Ask yourself, “What are you thinking?” Instead of being involved with the process of thinking, observe the thinking process. After you know the trains of thought that go through the mind, how many trains go up and how many trains go down; once you know this movement of the thought-trains in the mind, then the actual practice begins. You put up the red signal. Stop. Thoughts stop. Then you have to be selective in bringing in a thought. Which train is going to come first? Express trains. Passenger trains can come last, except at work hours they have the priority. You have to be selective in your thoughts. Give them the green signal one by one. Allow them to come, but make sure that they are controlled by you, they are guided by you, they are managed by you, and that the thoughts are free from negative content. In fact, the thoughts should be free from even a positive content; because you are the master. If you accept a thought with positive content, you have submitted to that thought. If you accept a thought with a negative content, you have submitted to that thought. How can you select?

If the thought conveys a positive or a negative idea, then pick up on that and go to the source and find out – is that negativity linked to my ego, my selfishness, my self-centred nature? Is it creating this symptom of jealousy, this symptom of anger or hatred? Peel the thoughts like you peel an onion and remove the skin, layer by layer.

It may be quite confusing in theory, but when we actually do it, the process is so simple and sequential. We have to do it because that has been the mandate of Krishna. So we will do it. In this way when we are able to bring our thoughts under control, harmonize our thoughts, then one aspect of our personality has been worked upon.

There are only three aspects of human nature: thought, behaviour and action; *sadvichara*, *sadvyavahara* and *satkarma*. These are the only three areas where we need to concentrate.

If we study the lessons of the intermediate class, that will help us understand the syllabus of the higher courses later on, when we enter the higher classes. Similarly, instead of thinking about God; instead of trying to pursue desires which we can only think about and not realize; if we can work towards stilling the mind, then it will give better results for our own internal journey. This has been the message of Sri Krishna to Arjuna.

For you to start off the process, that should be enough. I am not speaking a lot about thoughts because we already understand this concept and we have practised, in our own way, *antar mouna*. We have practised, in our own way, other techniques of *pratyahara*. So we know that this is the process we can follow. I am not dwelling upon the subject of thoughts in detail. I have just given a hint, an indication that *pratyahara* deals with thought management and the practice that deals with thought management is *antar mouna*. In *antar mouna*, we go through various stages of perfection: observation of thought, control and stopping of thought, creating a thought, and making the mind free from thought, so that no other condition can develop due to a *tamasic* or *rajasic* thought.

When the mind is free from thought, we do not wander around twenty-four hours of the day with a blank mind, no. Zero mind is only the first step; an ability we need to acquire to make ourselves *sthira*, stable. After that, when we are in control of the thoughts, we create our own thoughts – thoughts based on *jnana*, wisdom, and experience, *anubhava*. These thoughts are based on reality. Such thoughts are constructive, they are creative, uplifting, optimistic; they are charged with energy and they become a reality.

The spirit

The movements of the mind are influenced by the force of spirit. I'm not saying this in philosophical terms, I'm trying to explain to you in simple terms. Spirit is the governing factor of life, and mind is a medium by which we interact in the physical dimension and also in the subtle dimension. When the *vrittis* are *bahir mukhi*, extroverted, then the current flows

outwards, but when vrittis are *antar mukhi*, then the current flows inwards. Manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara – these streams, these currents flow in both directions, similar to the tide, it comes in and it goes out. Spirit is the governing force with the mind.

We have to recognize when that cosmic help or that cosmic condition is pushing the boat out into the rivers of the material world, and when it is pulling the boat towards the ocean, towards the centre. We have to flow with that current. There are times in daily life that we say, “Okay, now I want to sit and be quiet for some time.” There are times in our daily life when we say, “No, I can’t sit, I need to do something.” Why? We can give logic to whatever we do, but the fact remains that influences in the mind change continuously and conditions of the mind change continuously. We are unable to recognize those influences or conditions, and therefore we ask questions. But when we start the yogic process and become aware of the cosmic law governing the individual, then the realization comes, “Okay, now in this state of introversion I can channel my energies. Now I am in a state of extroversion, so I can guide my energies to act optimally.” This is what, as yoga practitioners, we try to achieve.

Improving thought, word and deed

Our topic right now is improvement of human behaviour. In Chapter 16 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna defines what one’s behaviour should be, how one should behave. Different dimensions of behaviour have been explained there and then in Chapter 17, the practical method to develop right behaviour has been described.

*Abhayam sattvasamshuddhir jnaanayogavyavasthitih
Daanam damashcha yajnyashcha svaadhyaayastapa aarjavam*

Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, alms-giving, control of the senses, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, and straightforwardness. (16:1)

*Ahimsaa satyamakrodhasthyaaga shaantirapaishunam
Dayaa bhooteshvalohuptvam maardavam hreerachaapalam*

Harmlessness, truth, absence of anger, renunciation of do-
ership, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion
towards beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty,
absence of fickleness. (16:2)

*Tejah kshamaa dhritih shauchamadroho naatimaanitaa
Bhavanti sampadam daiveemabhijaatasya bhaarata*

Vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred,
absence of pride, these qualities belong to one born for
a divine state, O Arjuna. (16:3)

*Dambho darpo bhimaanashcha krodhah paarushyameva cha;
ajnaanam chaabhijaatasya paartha sampadamaasureem.*

Hypocrisy, arrogance and self-conceit, anger, and also
harshness and ignorance belong to one who is born for a
demonical state, O Partha. (16:4)

*Daivee sampadvimokshaaya nibandhaayaasuree mataa;
maa shuchah sampadam daiveemabhijaato'si paandava.*

The divine nature is deemed conducive to liberation and
the demonical to bondage. Grieve not, O Arjuna! Thou
art born with divine endowments. (16:5)

There are two types of human nature: one type is known as
the divine human nature and the other type is known as the
demonical human nature. People who are endowed with the
demonical nature have hypocrisy, pretending to be what they
are not, *dambha*. Arrogance and self-conceit are there, pride.
Arrogance is pride in one's learning, wealth, connections; an
arrogant person cannot endure to see a fellow being happy.
An arrogant person is more aware of his or her needs and
that is their main drive in life, to fulfil their needs. If they
see happiness or prosperity in somebody else, immediately
the competitive nature develops. Pride is never considered
to be a right quality. *Krodha*, anger; *parushyam*, harshness;
and *ajnanam*, ignorance, are demonical qualities. These are

expressions of a mind which is under the influence of *tamas*, and each one of us expresses these different negative qualities at one time or the other in our own life.

Behaviour is an expression of mind. Behaviour is something manifesting outside, but it represents a state which we are feeling inside. If we feel angry, that anger is a state of mind, but anger is also seen in our expression. If we feel happy, that happiness is a state of mind, but it is also noticed in expression. So, a mental state which becomes visible is known as behaviour. A mental state expressed by the senses and recognized by another person is known as behaviour. The right behaviour, right conduct is of the divine quality, the divine category. The demonical binds us to this world and the divine lifts us from this world. The demonical nature and demonical tendencies give birth to bondage; divine tendencies, divine qualities liberate us from the bondage. And bondage is always self-created.

Bondage is created due to ignorance. Bondage is created due to arrogance. Bondage is created due to hypocrisy. Bondage is created because of our own projections in life, our own expressions in life. It is our habit, our nature, our attitude and our behaviour which creates the *bandha*, the bondage. Sri Krishna is saying that in order to harmonize the inner self, we need to develop certain qualities which are natural expressions of the personality. If we do not have the ability to express ourselves naturally, then we have to try to develop that ability.

We may be in a foul mood, but if we have to meet with somebody, do we go to that person with our foul mood or do we put on a plastic grin? We make the effort to smile, even though we may be in a foul mood. While we are interacting with that person, we may be seething inside, but we keep on smiling and trying to make little, little jokes. That is a type of training we provide to ourselves when we want to project an image that is different from our actual nature. In the course of time, with practice, some people become very good at it. We look at them smiling, but we never know what is going on in their heart and mind. Some people become experts.

Suddenly we may realize, 'No, something is not right,' but we can't put our finger on what is not right.

So what is the process of self-training that Sri Krishna has described later on? The godly behaviour, the divine behaviour begins with fearlessness, *abhaya*, where there is no fear, there is no insecurity in life which we are projecting. We are projecting self-confidence, we are projecting *atmavishwas*, and *sattwa samshuddhi*, purity of heart, which means there is no negativity felt for any being. There is an absence of negativity, there is an absence of violence from our feelings, our expressions, our emotions, and our thoughts. Steady in knowledge and yoga, *jnana yoga vyavasthiti*, steady in knowledge. We come back to *sthitaprajna*, a person with steady wisdom, a person who has the ability to act and not react. One who gives, *daanam*, implies one who gives and does not take; one who is in control of the senses, *damaha*, and one who is able to sacrifice.

Sacrifice here is not a religious ritual. Yajna is not a religious ritual. *Yajna*, or sacrifice in this context, means sacrificing the negative dimensions of nature. Overcoming, transcending, and transforming the negative dimensions of nature; that is yajna. The symbology behind yajna is that it is an offering to the fire. Fire represents light. Fire represents warmth. Fire represents strength which has the ability to burn anything and everything. *Agni*, fire, represents wisdom. It is the ignorance that has to be sacrificed in the fires of wisdom. That is the true yajna. That is the symbolic meaning of yajna.

Swadhyaya, one who is able to see oneself. *Tapaha*, one who is able to perform austerity, to purify oneself. *Arjava*, one who is truthful and straightforward. Fearlessness, purity of heart, steady wisdom: these are the three pre-eminent virtues among the sattwic attributes. A person who is in control of the mind expresses this nature, *swabhava*. Our swabhava is something continuous. Swabhava does not change; our nature does not change but we are unable to recognize the swabhava, the nature of other people because of our own conditionings and superimpositions of ideas on the intellect. Paramahamsaji gives an example to illustrate swabhava, and that example is of Rama and Bharata.

Insight

Rama was in exile and Bharata decided to go to the forest and request Rama to come back and ascend the throne. At that time, Bharata, along with the citizens and the army, came to Chitrakoot. When he was coming, there were many people who thought he was coming to attack Rama, and this thought came also to Lakshmana. Lakshmana said to Rama, “Bharata is coming to attack you, to kill you.” “Why do you think that?” “Because he’s coming with armies; he’s coming with a large crowd.” Rama said, “Lakshmana, you are wrong. You are looking at the appearance and you are ignoring the reality. If you know the nature, if you know the swabhava of Bharata, you will know that he would never think of committing any deed, any act which will go against the precepts of dharma, the family, or even myself. Bharata’s nature is not to make war. He’s not coming to destroy us. His coming here has a different purpose.”

It is a very simple story, but it shows that Rama had wisdom and insight into the nature of Bharata. After all, all the four brothers had grown up together and each one knew the nature of the other in and out, yet Lakshmana was not able to realize the purpose of Bharata’s coming. Lakshmana had superimposed his own fears on top of his buddhi, and he was reacting, he was angry, and he had lost the clarity of buddhi. So at that moment, Lakshmana became the person endowed with demonical qualities because he was reacting. His behaviour was demonical. Given the first opportunity he would be flying his arrows at Bharata, losing all sense of reason. It was only Rama who said, “No, let us not react. Let us analyze the situation and find out why Bharata is coming because from what I know of Bharata, even the thought to ascend the throne would never come to him. Hatred towards his elder brother was impossible. Jealousy towards other people was impossible. *Himsa*, violence, is not a subject of his nature.” This insight is into the swabhava, and the expression of swabhava.

In the further slokas (16:2–3), *ahimsa* is defined to be an expression of the human mind, non-injury in thought, word, and deed. *Satya* is living in truth, speaking the truth without

uttering unpleasant words. If we are established in satya, then satya includes: patience, endurance, kindness, and absence of jealousy, *akrodha*, absence of anger when insulted, rebuked; *tyaga*, renunciation of vasanas, ego, and fruits of action; *shanti*, serenity of mind; *apaishunam*, absence of narrow-mindedness; *daya*, compassion to those who are in distress; *aloluptvam*, non-covetousness; *tejah*, vigour, *kshama*, forgiveness, *dhriti*, fortitude, *shaucha*, purity, *adroha*, absence of hatred, and *natimanita*, absence of pride. These are the expressions of personality, which are recognized through one's behaviour.

How to cultivate these qualities? Through the perfection of yamas and niyamas. The component of yamas and niyamas in yoga is to improve human behaviour and Sri Krishna has defined the process, the practice which can lead to balanced behaviour. This process is known as tapasya. Tapasya is a process of transformation. Tapasya literally means austerity. Through austerity we bring about a change, a transformation in the basic structure of our nature, swabhava, and in the basic structure of our behaviour, *vyavahara*. There are three kinds of tapasyas: related with body, the physical dimension; related with *vani*, speech, the interactive process; and related with mind. These three forms of tapasya are the sattwic tapasyas (17:14–16):

*Devadvijagurupraajnapoojanam shauchamaarjavam;
brahmacharyamahimsaa cha shareeram tapa uchyate.*

Worship of the gods, the twice-born, the teachers and the wise, purity, straightforwardness, celibacy and non-injury are called the austerities of the body.

*Anudvegakaram vaakyam satyam priyahitam cha yat;
svaadhyaayaabhyasanam chaiva vaanmayam tapa uchyate.*

Speech which causes no excitement; truthful, pleasant and beneficial, the practice of the study of the Vedas are called austerity of speech.

*Manahprasaadah saumyatvam maunamaatmavinigraha;
bhaavasamshuddhirityetattapo maanasamuchyate.*

Serenity of mind, good-heartedness, self-control, purity of nature, this is called mental austerity.

In these three slokas, everything that has been defined relates to yamas and niyamas. What are the yamas? Satya, truthfulness; ahimsa, non-violence; *asteya*, non-stealing; *aparigraha*, non-accumulation; and *brahmacharya*, celibacy. The five niyamas are: *shaucha*, purity; *santosh*, contentment; *tapas*, austerity; *swadhyaya*, self-study; *Ishwara pranidhana*, surrender to God.

The purpose behind yamas and niyamas, according to Sage Patanjali, is to cultivate these qualities in life which can free the mind from negativity and allow our interaction to take place with other beings around us in a positive way where we are able to express the purity of ourselves, and not the crookedness of the mind. How can we cultivate the yamas and niyamas? What is the process of cultivating the yamas and niyamas? Just as we learn asana and pranayama, just as we learn meditation and other spiritual techniques, one should make an effort to learn the yamas and niyamas.

Practical steps

It is improper to think, 'Oh, they are simple ideas. I can practise them at home.' Perfection in yamas and niyamas happens in an environment which is conducive to awakening these concepts, conducive to changes that you bring about in yourself. For this reason, in the past, people used to go for *tirtha yatra*s, for pilgrimages. It is for this reason that people used to go to ashrams, live in the company of an enlightened being, go through a process of introspection – to try to adjust their life. After learning, they used to go back and practise them at home. Change of environment is necessary. There are specific environments where you can cultivate and nurture a quality, a behaviour, a personality. At home, in society, you are expressing yourself, but you are not learning anything new. In order to learn something new, you need to change the environment.

Go to an ashram, live there for ten days, fifteen days, one week or one month every year. While you are there, you go

through the process of learning, one thing at one time. When you go to a place that is conducive to learning, then pick up one item: satya or shaucha, ahimsa or santosha, one of the yamas or one of the niyamas, and while you live there, try to live that particular principle. This learning is a meditative learning. This learning is a transformative learning. This learning is the real learning. This is known as tapasya, an effort to transform the basic nature and to allow the purity of your life to come forth. Tapasya is burning the dross. In order to remove the impurities from gold, you have to put it in a fire and burn it, then the pure gold separates from the impurities due to the heat. Similarly, the process of burning the dross from personality is known as tapasya.

You have to pick up one yama and one niyama, and you have to follow it to the end to whatever extent you can, say in one week's time. Once the concept becomes clear, then even when you return back home, in the home environment, do whatever you can. Even if it is only five percent, try to maintain that understanding, and if you are able to maintain that effort, then transformations take place.

In the *Gita*, it says we interact with the world through speech. Behaviour is reflected in speech. We can speak nicely, we can speak wisely, we can speak with wisdom, or the speech can reflect our arrogance and ignorance, or the insecure you. It also says that a yogi is a person who is aware of mind, intellect, and speech. A yogi is that person who is aware of mind, manas, the process of analysis, the process of reflection, the process of thinking; buddhi, the process of knowing; and vani, the process of interacting. A yogi is one who is aware of these three things and tries to attain self-purification by managing these three things, and this leads to the experience of harmony and peace.

Yamas and niyamas lead to the experience of peace within, and then when the mind expresses itself outside, it conveys harmony and optimism. So learn the yamas and niyamas. Try to live them one at a time. Live one yama for six months and one niyama for six months, and then move to the next and the next.

Satsang on Karma

28th May to 2nd June 1998, Mumbai

The subject is karma, action. It goes without saying that action or karma is an integral part of life. We cannot live without karma. We cannot live without action, reaction and interaction in life nor is it possible to conceive of a life without these three.

What is karma? Generally, karma is translated as action, performance, activity. But karma also contains within itself the cause and the effect. It is not only activity. It is not only action. Rather, karma is a potential, containing the cause and the effect in itself. Senses perform karma, the mind performs karma, and the involvement of the person with the karma, the association of the person with a karma, creates attachment.

Attachment to an action gives birth to craving for the result or the fruit. This is the normal karma. However, the spiritual traditions have said that karma should be practised to attain self-purification, and this sentiment has been stated in the *Bhagavad Gita* (5:10–11):

*Brahmanyaadhaaya karmaani sangam tyaktva karoti yah;
Lipyate na sa paapena padmapatramivaambhasaa.*

He who does actions, offering them to Brahman, and abandoning attachment, is not tainted by sin, just as a lotus leaf is not tainted by water. (5:10)

*Kaayena manasaa buddhya kevalairindriyairapi;
Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktvaatmashuddhaye.*

Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform actions only by the body, mind, intellect and even by the senses, for the purification of the self. (5:11)

Karmas are to be performed for purification of the self and not to bind one to the world of senses and objects.

According to human nature, according to human *swabhava*, we need a support which we can identify with and depend on. This support on one side, is the material world, and on the other side is the cosmic reality. When we are looking for support in the material dimension, performing the karmas, performing the actions, then our mind naturally gravitates towards the material world, and this gravity which attracts the mind is known as *asakti*, attachment. The same gravity, when it pulls the mind towards the other side, towards the other support, is also *asakti*, attachment. The difference is that in one form of *asakti*, in one form of attachment, we are liberated; in the other form of *asakti*, we are in bondage.

Asakti, or attachment to the material world, does not end when we finish off an action or by the completion of an action. Instead, in the material world, the action becomes the cause of another action. Why? In the material world we are subject to *gunas*, whereas in the transcendental dimension we are beyond the *gunas*. In the material world, we are under the influence of *karma*, and *karma* determines our *purushartha*, our effort. In the spiritual dimension, we are the master of the *karma* and *karmas* are performed to achieve the end result. It has been emphasized again and again that expectation has to be removed from the process of *karma*. As long as our mind is subject to the three *gunas*, there is bound to be expectations, and these expectations give birth to craving, *vasana*. These expectations, associated with *karma*, satisfy our ego. If the expectations are not fulfilled, the self-image, the ego, is hurt. It can be something basic: just the need to be loved, the need to be recognized, the need to be secure financially. Why do we go to work? Because we know that at the end of the month we are going to get our paycheque. If we knew that we were not going to get our paycheque, would we go to work? No.

Expectation is there, and it is that expectation, *asha*, for the result of our performance, *karmaphala*, which motivates us to create a sequence of actions, not just one action. The more actions that are created, the more problems we face because of expectations, and the more problems we face because of ego involvement. Therefore, it has been emphasized again and again, that one should overcome expectation. This is a *sadhana* for a yogi.

There are three words: 'karma' is one word, 'karma yoga' is another word, and 'karma sannyasa' is another word. The common word in all three is 'karma', representing sequential action combined with expectation, combined with inherent effect. When we add the word 'yoga' to the word karma, it represents awareness of the karma; not just blindly following the course of an action, rather, an awareness of the karma. Once we are aware of the karma, what we are doing, what we are performing, then we are able to discriminate between good karma and bad karma. This is the beginning of the process where we overcome our expectations associated with a karma.

We can go further in this process – remove the word 'yoga' from karma and add the word 'sannyasa'. *Karma sannyasa* indicates a state of mind where we are totally free from the *karmaphala*, the results and from expectations, and we recognize karma as an obligation, as a duty, a *kartavya*, not as a need. In normal situations, karmas are needs. We need to do them and we involve ourselves because we feel it is a need, but in the *karma sannyasa* state, involvement is not there. We have the right to perform the action, but we have no right over the outcome, over the result of the karma. Sometimes this process can be painful.

You are well aware of the story of a saintly person who, while he was taking a bath in the river, sees a scorpion drowning. He looks around for some leaf or twig with which he can lift out the scorpion and put it on the bank. Nothing there; so he lifts up the scorpion with his hand and brings it to the bank. The scorpion was not in a happy mood; it was fearful, half drowned, and in that agitated mood, the scorpion stung his hand. Of course, due to the pain, the saint's hand jerked,

and the scorpion again fell in the water. Again, that man lifted up the scorpion. The scorpion still wasn't appreciating the good deed and stung him again – so again, in the water! Four, five, six times it happened. Put yourself in the place of the person. What would you have done? I know what I would have done. I would have given the scorpion instant mukti.

The people who were watching that saintly person perform this deed said to him, “Why are you bothering? The scorpion has stung you so many times, yet you still feel compassionate towards this creature?” He said, “Look, it is not a question of being compassionate. After all, what is compassion? It is a state of mind. It is my duty to save a creature in distress, that is my nature. And it is the nature of a scorpion to sting. It stings, but because it stings I don't have to change my nature. The scorpion is following its nature; I have to follow my nature.”

This is an example of how, sometimes, when we perform a karma, it can be painful, but when we recognize that karma to be our kartavya, our duty or obligation or dharma, then there is no personal association and no expectation of the karma: *Bahujana hitaya bahujana sukhaya* – “For the welfare of many, for the happiness of many.” This is karma sannyasa, not the initiation into the sannyasa sampradaya, but the state in which we are able to separate ourselves from actions, the state in which we are able to observe ourselves performing the karma without being associated with the karma. That is possible with detachment.

Practical steps

When we talk of karma yoga, we are talking of awareness combined with karma. When we talk of karma sannyasa, then we are talking of wisdom combined with karma. In order to improve action, to be the master of the action, first discover to what degree you are involved with the actions you perform each day.

Run through them mentally at night before sleeping. What time did you wake up, what did you have for breakfast, with whom did you speak, what was the subject: gossip, work-related discussion, problem-related discussion; whether you

reacted, expressed your frustration, expressed your anger, and so on. Objectively see how you have lived the day. Relive those moments and see with each karma that you performed during the day, how deeply you were involved with it. See how deeply you were involved with it, and this is the beginning of recognizing your involvement with karma.

Next stage: develop awareness while the karma is being performed. How to do it? While reliving the events of the day at night, make a *sankalpa* at the end: 'If I find myself in the same situation again, instead of reacting I will deal with it with a cool mind, with clarity of mind, and with wisdom'. This *sankalpa*, or this positive affirmation, in the course of time will nag you. It will make you alert. The alarm bells will go off in the mind whenever you confront the same situation for which you have made the *sankalpa*. You will recognize that situation saying, "Oh, last time I made a mistake. This time I have to improve."

Another method: select ten minutes of the day at work or at home. During those ten minutes make an effort to be aware of every action that you perform physically, mentally, and emotionally. Be aware of every movement that is created in the dimension of the senses, in the dimension of the mind, in the dimension of the intellect, in the dimension of the emotions. It is like a waking meditation. Extend the awareness all around yourself. It is a meditation with eyes open. It is a dynamic meditation. It is a meditation to increase awareness. After ten minutes find out if, in these actions, there is any expectation from your side or not. Identify those expectations. It may be something simple or it may be something complicated.

In the third stage: analyze those expectations. Are those expectations my actual needs or are they the simple outcome of performing an activity, about which I have not given any thought. Are there expectations to help me rise up in my life, get recognition, status, name or fame? Are these expectations my own projections of mind, my own fantasies? Recognize the expectations.

In the fourth stage: try to be detached. Try to detach yourself from the results so that you work, not for a result or

for fulfilment of an expectation, but as your dharma, as your duty. The moment you are able to develop this awareness, jnana becomes an integral part of karma. At that time there is a natural feeling that, “I am not the doer, I am not the performer” – *Naham karta naham bhokta*. “The higher force is the doer. The higher force is the performer” – *Hari karta, Hari karta ki kaivalam*. This is something which you have to learn.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Did the Mahabharata and such events really happen?

Yes, they did. In another five thousand years, somebody will ask the same thing, “Did the First World War actually happen?” “Did the Second World War actually happen?” Yes, they happened. The Mahabharata was the war which brought the curtains down in this country. That was the destruction of a civilization, and we have not been able to recuperate from that destruction, even today. Wars are a reality and they happen in every age. They happen every year. They happen in every century. And the memories, after so many thousands of years, continue in the form of stories.

How do we know what is good and what is evil? It is only much later that we discover what was right and what was wrong. When Hitler came on the scene, did the world classify him as ‘bad’? No. He had a mission and he was able to motivate an entire nation. Today we can find fault and say, “This was bad,” but at that time, at first, we could not. When Gandhi came on the scene and he did certain things, because they were compatible with our idea of goodness, we accepted it. Five hundred years later somebody may criticize Gandhi, because values will change. Right and wrong, good and evil, such concepts change all the time, and I don’t think that we need to be a judge. We have no right to judge what is right, what is wrong for others, but we have to maintain our own concept of the righteous act.

The Pandavas were thought of as trouble-makers in that age, in the time of Duryodhana. Of course! Bhima was a

terrorist; he used to bully all the brothers. So it depends from whose side we are looking. If we look at the whole situation from the Kauravas side, Bhima was a bully. Arjuna was an arrogant warrior. Nakula and Sahadeva were playboys, with a lot of pride in their beauty. Yudhishtira was always on a high chariot; he was the most righteous person on this planet. If I had been a Kaurava, I would be hating the Pandavas because they are all sitting on their high horses. So it depends on whose side we are on.

Can my sadhana be blocked by my samskaras?

Samskaras and karmas can create some hindrance if the sadhana goes against the predominant samskara. If my predominant samskara is to eat and somebody tells me, “Oh, you need to fast,” then what will happen? If my predominant samskara is to sleep, and somebody says, “Well, you can’t sleep, you have to sit and meditate,” of course it will be a barrier. So samskaras can come in between, but when we recognize them, then we have to manage them also.

Are sannyasins free from karma?

No. After all, as sannyasins we also perform karma just as householders perform karma. As sannyasins, we sometimes have to perform more difficult karmas. You have to file an income tax return for a group of four in the family. We have to file income tax returns for a group of 300 in the institution. You have to manage with the problems of four in the family. We have to manage the problems of 300 who live in the institution. Who is in a tighter spot? So, who is in a tighter spot, you or I? Definitely it is me.

Sannyasins have gone from the frying pan into the fire. At least when you are in a frying pan, you can add some spices and salt and make the food tasty, but when you are in the fire rotating on a spit, you just burn your own fat. That’s why we are healthy.

In your life you are performing karma, we are performing the same karma, but the attitude is different. If you are not able to achieve what you want, you’ll experience depression.

If sannyasins are not able to achieve what we want, it doesn't make any difference. Try again! You may say that it indicates adopting a basic philosophy in life. You may say that it is due to spiritual development. You may say that it is due to the sannyasa lifestyle. You can say anything you want, but our participation with an action as a human being is a play of attitude only. If the attitude is right and not associated with a sense object or with a result, then life is smooth sailing. If that attitude is associated with the fruits of the action, then there is struggle.

If somebody builds a home and after some time the house burns down, what will be the condition of the person? All the expectations, all the desires, everything was centred in that house. The lifelong aspiration, the lifelong savings, everything was centred in that house. With the burning of the house, comes a shock, won't it? But, if today Ganga Darshan burns down we will make another Ganga Darshan out of the ashes of the first. No problem, we won't have any shock. What does this indicate? Not that somebody is superior or somebody is inferior, it is just a realization of karma, realization of jnana, realization of bhava – attitude, wisdom, action.

It is for this reason that in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna said to Arjuna again and again, "Be a karma yogi. Don't shy away from karma because you expect failure. Don't jump headlong into the karma because you expect success. Be a karma yogi. Be aware of the karma. Be a karma sannyasi. Perform action with wisdom and you shall attain." I hope that you will also attain. I'm placing my bets on all of you.

Of course, an action performed with perfection, without expectation, is the right action. If you are going to do something, put your head, heart and soul behind it; otherwise don't bother. If you love somebody and you are not passionate, your heart is not in it, your mind is not in it. Does love have any meaning? No. Love only has meaning when the heart is involved passionately, mind is involved passionately, and senses are involved passionately; then you can see stars during the day.

Similarly, with karma too. If you are not involved with the karma head, heart, and soul, then you will make mistakes.

That karma will be imperfect karma and because of mistakes, again it is you who will suffer; but if you are in that process of karma head, heart and soul, then you are doing your best. At least you have the satisfaction that, 'I have done my best'. After all, you can't escape or hide from yourself. When you do something right, you know you have done something right. When you do something wrong, you know you have done something wrong, and you brood upon it, you feel guilty about it, you feel happy about it, you feel sad about it and I wish to see that you people are happy that you have done something next time I come.

Management of thought, management of behaviour, and management of action has to be the thrust of yoga practice in the coming times. It's all right, we can practise asana for physical wellbeing, we can practise meditation for experiencing some relaxation, peace and quiet in the mind and to remove stress and anxiety, but now we have to give a focus to our yogic efforts. That focus has to be something grounded, something practical that can improve our life condition today. Forget about the afterlife; work for something to improve the situation today.

The immediate focus which you can give to yourself and try to attain through the practice of yoga is management of thought, management of behaviour, and management of action. It is with this sankalpa, with this thought, that I wish you to depart from here today, then I will feel happy. That you have gone back with a sankalpa which will help you overcome the difficulties, the problems that you face in life and find difficult to solve correctly. This has to be the thrust of yoga at present.

1999

Lucknow

Chennai



Three Dimensions of Yoga

30 January 1999, Indian Army Central Committee
Headquarters, Lucknow

Whenever we have physical and psychological problems, we look at the symptoms and not at the cause. Even the most modern medical science aims at the symptoms that manifest in the form of disease in the body, and in the form of imbalance in the mind. To a great extent, we are able to control the symptoms that cause the disease or the mental and emotional imbalance, but we are not able to go to the root cause of the problem.

Our life is not limited only to the experiences of the body and mind. There is another dimension of life, which is the spirit. The spirit is the root of our life. If we are able to nourish the spirit, if we are able to take care of the spirit, then I can assure you of a healthy body and a balanced, harmonious, sharp and brilliant mind. This is the basic understanding with which yoga begins.

Yoga does not see any divisions between body, mind and spirit. The question may come up as to where the spirit is? I can feel and see the body because it is something physical. I can understand, feel, and experience the mind because of the expressions of my emotions, thoughts, anxieties and fears, but what about the spirit? The body is physical, gross. The mind is subtle; it has no density. The body is dense but the mind has no density. We know that the mind exists and is a subtle force. Similarly, the spirit also exists as a subtle life force. We are alive because of the spirit and if the spirit leaves the body, no matter how active the mind is, no matter how

healthy the body is, they will become lifeless. This has been the understanding of yoga in relation to the human being. We cater to the needs of the mind, but we do not know how to cater to the needs of the spirit. The entire system of yoga has been devised to manage these three dimensions, these three aspects of our existence: body, mind and spirit.

Before I begin with the exposition of yoga, I would like to make it very clear that yoga is a tradition and not a religion. Yoga is a tradition that aims at the awakening of the dormant human potential, which in yogic terminology is known as the *kundalini*. This dormant human potential does not make anybody spiritual or enlightened, but it harmonizes our experiences and expressions. It provides us with greater comprehension, greater understanding and greater control over our actions, thoughts, ambitions and aspirations. Thus, the aim is to make a human being into a better human being, regardless of personal affiliations, thoughts, beliefs, ideologies and religion.

Yoga and dharma

I am not talking of the different sects like Shaivism and Vaishnavism; however, yoga does say that it is our duty to be dharmic and in yoga, the concept of dharma is based on the harmonious expression of human potential. The definition of dharma is *sadvichara*, righteous thought, *sadvyavahara*, righteous interactions, and *satkarma*, righteous performance; dharmic thoughts, interaction or behaviour and actions are based on the principles of *viveka*, the faculty of discrimination, and understanding the needs which we feel in our life and in society. It is with this attitude that yoga complements the dharma of everyone, therefore I say from the outset, that yoga is not part of a religion.

Do not be confused by looking at us. We are sannyasins, and just as you are protectors of the land, we are protectors of dharma. Not sectarian dharma, please remember this, but human dharma which is based on the principles of righteous thinking, righteous interaction and behaviour, and righteous performance. Sannyasa is our personal life; yoga is our

professional life. There is a difference between personal life and professional life. I wish to make it clear so you do not say, “How can you, as a sannyasi, come and tell us about yoga?” There is a reason why we propagate and teach yoga.

Application of yoga

Before I go into the theory and practice of yoga, let me just give you a broad outline of the applications of yoga in human society today. The world over, yoga is recognized as one of the forms of therapy. We have been involved in the study of various psychosomatic and psychological disorders, various ailments and diseases, starting with arthritis, constipation, headache and spondylitis, and going right up the ladder to the management of diabetes, asthma, cancer and even AIDS. From this point of view, yoga is coming forward as a potent therapy. This fact has been recognized by the Health Department in the state of Bihar.

A few years ago, the Bihar School of Yoga was interested in training medical students in the principles of yoga therapy. The outcome of this training was that a law was passed in Bihar that all the practising doctors must know about yoga therapy, they must undergo training in yoga. It has also been recommended to the Indian Medical Council that yoga should become part of the MBBS syllabus. This is one aspect, the therapy aspect.

Another aspect of yoga has been personality development and management. In this field we have been working with prisoners in twenty-four prisons of Bihar. Over twenty-thousand prisoners have been trained in yoga. The changes perceived in their attitude, behaviour, and perception of life have been incredible. They have become more compassionate and kind, more peaceful and tranquil, and also more responsible. They are now able to carry out their duty without any thought of vendetta or revenge. When we were conducting the courses, prisoners who were granted bail refused it in order to participate in the yoga program. I do not think anybody would refuse bail easily. Everybody wants to be out of that situation. Everybody wants to come out.

Yoga and education

The third area of application of yoga has been in education. We had been trying to bring yoga into the educational system, but we were unable to do it. So we started an experiment in France. We took the worst college with the worst reputation in France. The name of that college is College Condorcet, located in Paris. There, the statistics were that if five students would pass the exams in one year it was a record for the college. Students were into drugs, violence and all sorts of detrimental actions, which were harmful to society. In three months the students changed. Today College Condorcet is the most prestigious college in the whole of France.

As a result, the French government made the practise of yoga compulsory in its colleges and high schools. Today, yoga, under the arrangement of UNESCO is being taught in seventeen countries in Europe. Those seventeen countries of Europe have accepted yoga as part of their educational system. This development happened in 1994. I was invited to this UNESCO conference and we had discussions on the benefits of yoga in relation to improving the memory, concentration and retention ability of students. We discussed the changes in personality. The psychoanalysts and psychologists came forward and accepted the facts. As a result of that, yoga is taught in seventeen countries on the European continent.

Now this trend has started in India too. We had discussions with the Department of Education and we are planning to bring yoga to schools, right up to the college and university level.

Drugs, crime, the army and industry

In the management of crime and drug addiction, the principles and practices of yoga are being used in South America. Colombia is famous for its cocaine, and there is a very strong drug cartel there. In 1995 the Colombian Minister of Education made a special Department of Yoga just to study how yoga can help manage drug addiction and crime. This Department of Yoga is in the most prestigious University in Colombia, the University of the Andes.

We have also had the opportunity to interact with the Indian Army at the time of the late General B.C. Joshi. We made programs to manage the psychological problems faced by soldiers in high altitudes, specifically in the Siachen region. We also made programs for the soldiers on desert deployments.

All these different applications of yoga speak volumes about the subject of yoga. Yoga is not something you do just for your own personal enlightenment. It is also of social value. It can be incorporated in any field of society whether it is industry, or problems with unions. We have been teaching yoga in the Indian Oil Corporation Refineries, and also in the coal sector where people who suffer from breathing problems and other difficulties resort to alcohol and other substances. We have been successful there. I am telling you about these applications so you can understand the scope of yoga.

Of course, today yoga is seen by society either as a physical science, where you are made to perform certain asanas, or as a spiritual science where you are made to practise meditation and mantras, and do many other such acts. This makes one feel that yoga is not a necessity, but a fad. However, we think the opposite – yoga is not a fashion, but a necessity.

The physical dimension of yoga

There are three distinct aspects of yoga. If we wish to categorize yoga into groups, we can easily say it has a physical dimension, a mental dimension and a spiritual dimension. The physical dimension of yoga incorporates the practices of *asanas*, postures. Some people think that asanas are difficult.

Before we start the practice I want to show you the most difficult asana: standing upright, straight, and with the feet firmly planted on the ground. This is the most difficult asana. Why? Just think for yourself. Do we have the ability to stand on our own two feet with confidence, joy, happiness and optimism? I doubt it. We do not have the ability to stand on our own two feet with self-confidence. We do not have the ability to stand on our own two feet with peace and tranquillity of mind and emotions.

Today, despite all our efforts, we have become so weak that I do not doubt that in the future we will be walking around with a label that says, 'Fragile, Handle with Care'. Our bodies are weak, our minds are weak, our emotions are weak, our belief systems are dissipated. Our moral values and our character are gone. We will be walking around with a label that says, 'Fragile, Handle with Care' because we may break at any time.

The physical dimension of yoga provides a capsule of exercises especially for those people who spend a lot of time in chairs and offices, in closed environments. If you practise these capsules, you will know that the simplest practices can be the most indispensable for your health and wellbeing.

The first is known as *tadasana*. This is the practice in which you interlock the fingers and place them on the top of the head. Breathing in, you stretch the body up, raising the arms up also. Standing on the toes you feel the stretch. Breathing out, you again plant the feet firmly back on the ground and bring the hands back on the head. If you do this practice five to ten times you will find it provides traction to the whole body.

When we sit, when we travel, our spine is compressed. Because of this compression of the spine, and because of the type of work we do, we begin to feel pain in the shoulders in the form of *spondylitis*. We begin to feel pain in the lower back and loss of circulation in the legs due to our posture. *Tadasana* provides traction to the whole body. Just five to seven rounds of practise daily ensure you will not have any backache or upper spinal problems, including *spondylitis*.

There are only certain ways in which we can optimally move the body, and all the exercises we do, we are never able to move the body optimally. In the practice of *tiryak tadasana*, you actually stretch the sides of the body. You bend to the right. There is contraction on one side and stretch on the other. Then you bend to the other side. There is contraction and stretch on the alternate sides. This also provides a complete stretch to all the muscles and sub-muscles, which are hardly ever used in the course of our daily activity. This is

the second practice that can be done five to ten times daily, no more than that. The third asana is kati chakrasana, twisting. In this practice you twist the body to either side, ensuring proper circulation.

The most complete series that we teach is known as *surya namaskara*, salute to the sun. It is a series of twelve postures. These postures are the most complete postures providing total exercise to the entire physical system such as the respiratory system, cardiovascular system and digestive system. It also increases the physical immune system ability to combat various diseases, viruses and bacteria. The entire immune system is revitalized by the practice of *surya namaskara*. These are the basic postures of yoga. Of course, what you see in different demonstrations of people standing on their head and tying their body in knots by performing a very complex posture, are not asanas that are taught to everybody.

If we think that medical science is only surgery, it is our misconception. Similarly, if we think that performing complex asanas is yoga, it is a misconception. The theory is 'perform the minimum number but get the maximum benefit out of it'. Perform the simplest of the asanas, but those asanas must influence the entire physiological structure, the entire anatomical structure. Enhancing the ability of the different physiological systems will lead to health.

The concept of health is not the absence of disease from the body but the proper management of disease. Nobody can be completely free from disease. If you have taken birth you will experience old age and death. No one can stop old age. No one can stop death. One day, they will indeed come but why allow physical conditions to make us feel like an invalid, helpless? So, proper management of disease is the aim of yoga, not the absence of disease from the body.

This is the theory followed by the practise of asanas and the practices of hatha yoga, which help to purify and detoxify the body. I am sure that in the coming days you will be learning some of these practices and get a first-hand experience of the quality of wellbeing that yoga can provide you with. This is the physical dimension of yoga.

The mental dimension of yoga

The mental dimension of yoga is vast and deals with the management of the mind. In fact, if you ask me what yoga is I would say that it is nothing but a system of knowing mind management. It is a system of managing one's mind. The tradition, or the ancient literature, talks about yoga as a system of mind management. This includes Patanjali who codified the subject of raja yoga.

There are two main statements made by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* and the entire subject of yoga is based on these two statements. These two statements are (1:1 and 1:2): *Athah yoga anushasanam* – “Yoga is a form of discipline” and *Yogashchitta vritti nirodhah* – “Discipline helps you to control your mind; yoga is mind management.” So why is there a need for mind management?

Yoga and stress

We are subject to tension, stress and anxiety. Even monotony creates stress. Stress is not bad. In order to live and survive, stress is a must, but if that stress becomes ‘distress’ it means something is wrong somewhere. Stress indicates a state of readiness, a state of alertness. Attention, or as you say on the parade ground ‘*savadhana!*’ That attention is the state of readiness or alertness, but if that state of savadhana becomes distress, it means there is some blockage, some imbalance that has to be managed. The mind, our brain, is continually being bombarded by information that it cannot filter immediately. Plus, our personal needs, ambitions, weaknesses, limitations, and also the environment where we live and work, create stressful conditions within the mind.

How does yoga manage stress? By teaching us how to relax. Please note, it is not necessary for the idea of relaxation to be associated with sleep. Sleep does not provide us with relaxation at all. Relaxation and sleep are two different things. Relaxation is a conscious process of eliminating stress from the mind, from the thoughts, from the body. Sleep, as you know, is absence of waking consciousness. So I am not talking of sleep here. When I use the word relaxation, do

not confuse it with sleep. Rather, it is the wilful, conscious elimination of factors that create distress in us that is relaxation.

Four factors in life

A human being works at four levels, or we can say that a human being is influenced by four factors in life. The first factor is personal strength and that can be willpower, self-confidence, knowledge, or being able to understand a situation. The second factor is weakness, insecurity, inhibitions, complexes and phobias. There is a continuous fight between personal strength and personal weakness. Sometimes the strength is powerful, so we can subdue the weaknesses and go forward. Sometimes the weaknesses become strong and despite knowing it, if we try to achieve our goal, we are not able to march forward. The third factor is ambition, what we desire for ourselves, for our family, our society, and our nation. The fourth factor is need, something to which we are all subject. Sometimes there is a conflict between ambition and need. Sometimes we confuse our ambition with our need. When that happens we cannot go forward. These are the different factors that influence the mind, create our personality and make us what we are today.

Mind management is a system of observation, analysis, relaxation and concentration, which leads us to a greater understanding of our personality and our character. Once we start this process, once we begin this journey, transformation of mind begins to take place. From being pessimistic, we become optimistic. The situations do not change, we change. If somebody comes with half a glass of water and asks how much is contained in it, we may say the glass is half-empty or we may say the glass is half-full. If we say the glass is half-empty, we are pessimistic. If we say the glass is half-full, we are optimistic. The word 'empty' in psychological terms, denotes pessimism. Something is missing from our lives. The word 'empty' in every kind of psychology, whether it is yogic psychology or modern psychology, denotes a state of absence of something we want to be filled, and that is pessimism.

If we say half-full, we do not feel a lack. That is an expression of an optimistic person. The quantity has not changed in the glass. It is our perception that has changed. Along with our perception, our ability to accept a situation and respond to a situation has changed. This is the mental side of yoga – transformation of mind to make it more positive, optimistic, confident and relaxed.

The spiritual dimension of yoga

Next comes the spiritual aspect of yoga, which is beyond the mind. It deals with the awakening of human consciousness. It has been proven by the practitioners, the *sadhakas*, that there is another dimension to know. Whether we call it the unconscious or the supraconscious, whatever we may call it, that consciousness is a storehouse of energy, strength and potentials. The energy is represented in this human frame in the form of psychic centres, *chakras*.

Each chakra has its own potential. Each chakra has its own energy expression. These chakras, which are the storehouse of energy and consciousness, when awakened, alter human nature. When human nature alters, our personal vision of life, which was self-centred until then, becomes a universal vision of life. Instead of connecting with our pain and pleasure in life, we are able to connect with the pain and pleasure of other beings. We have vision and knowledge. We are able to realize that our help and our contribution for the wellbeing and uplifting of others, is a contribution to a different cause, and that cause is spiritual.

These are the three dimensions of yoga, which can make us realize the human potential and the role each human plays in the world, thus fulfilling the vision, the prophecy of ancient India: *atma deepo bhava* – to provide the world with enlightened beings. Therefore, it is a request from my side that you give yoga a chance in your life.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

What sort of yoga should one practise for insomnia?

There is a technique which is known as yoga nidra, the yogic sleep or the psychic sleep. In this practice, you are guided into a state of deep relaxation where you become free from anxieties and worries and you are able to relax. The relaxation is such that even the worst cases of insomnia can be helped. We have had people who have not been able to sleep naturally for ten years without sleeping pills, and within ten minutes of practising yoga nidra they slept like a baby. We have recorded their snores and only then have they believed that they had really slept.

Should asanas be done in sequence?

Asanas have to be done in sequence and the sequence which we suggest initially, is a series of asanas known as the pawanmuktasana series. It works from the toes and gradually moves upward through the other parts of the body. This particular series loosens the joints and muscles, releases the tensions, ensures proper circulation and prepares the body for other practices of yoga.

In general, there is a rule that if you do one forward bending posture, then you also have to perform the reverse of it, a backward bend. If you do one stretching posture, you have to do a posture of inversion so that the systems which are being affected by the practise of one posture are harmonized.

Is meditation a part of yoga, or separate?

Yes, the meditation in raja yoga is the seventh class in yoga. According to the yogic tradition, the first class in yoga is yama. The second class is niyama. The third class is asana. The fourth is pranayama, the fifth is pratyahara, the sixth is dharana, the seventh is *dhyana*, meditation, and the eighth is samadhi.

My view is slightly different. The first class today is asana because when the yogic literatures were written, they were written for a different society, a different group of people

who had different priorities; who had a different lifestyle and environment to live in. The conditions that existed 5,000 years ago are not the ones today so there had to be some changes in the system. Today our need is asana first because we are well aware of the imbalances occurring in our body: pain in the knees, pain in the back, pain in the shoulders, pain in the joints, arthritis, gout, rheumatism, and so on. The physical dimension of yoga and physical health has to be obtained through the practice of asanas.

Learning how to concentrate is next. In today's society there is so much dissipation of awareness, there is so much dissipation of attention that if we ask anybody to concentrate, they find it difficult. So concentration has to be taught. There are specific practices for concentration and I will tell you one experiment which we have done.

In Mhow Military Headquarters, we taught the sharpshooters techniques of concentration. According to the report we got from the camp, in just one week of practice, their concentration had improved 35 percent. They were able to hit the targets better. These statistics were provided by their people, not by us, so I am sure they had their own way of measuring the range of concentration.

There are specific practices which can lead one to enhanced or developed concentration. This is taught in the systems of pratyahara. The next stage is dharana. Dharana means to hold the state of concentration, to hold the state of retention, to hold the state of one-pointedness. The techniques here are meditative, but they are much deeper than the pratyahara techniques which lead to concentration.

After the mental health has been obtained, the moral health and corrective building happens with the practise of the yamas and niyamas. After that, we move into a natural meditative process which always remains in the seventh class. In society today we speak a lot about meditation, yet what is taught is not meditation. What is taught is concentration because meditation is a state of mind. It is not a practice. Meditation, or the meditative state of mind, is not a practice. It is something which happens naturally after the dissipations,

the agitations, fluctuations and anxieties of the mind have stopped. Stress created by anxiety and stress created by monotony, both have stopped.

Meditation, or the meditative state of mind, denotes a balanced state of mind so meditation is not something which can be practised. It is something which is the outcome of our practices in pratyahara and dharana.

This spiritual force which we obtain from yoga, if it comes out of chakras, is it half-biological and half-supernatural? What is the parent source through which this force comes to us?

In brief, yoga sees a human personality as the composition of five different bodies. The first body is composed of matter, which is our physical body. The first body is without consciousness; it is just a body of matter. The body of matter is the *annamaya sharira* and is complemented by pranamaya, the life force, the dynamism, the motion, the energy. That is the *pranamaya sharira*. The third body is the *manomaya*, the mind. The fourth body is the *vijñanamaya*, the intuitive, what can be called 'supernormal'. The fifth body is *anandamaya*, the spiritual. So we have physical, we have energy, we have mind, we have supramental. and we have spiritual. All these are put together. When these come together, it makes one unit which is you, me and everyone here.

We don't see milk in butter or yoghurt, but its tattwa is still there. Similarly in our body, we take everything for granted, but each layer of the body can be experienced separately. When we take butter out of milk, it has its separate identity and separate nature. Similarly, we can isolate, experience or awaken different layers of the body. This awakening in kundalini yoga is associated with different chakras.

Chakras are symbolic representations, which in the physical body are represented by nerve plexuses; they are represented by lotus flowers because in our tradition the lotus has always represented mind and consciousness. In the energy system, in the energy body, they are represented in the form of energy vortices and chakras. The awakening of

chakras can be felt physically, psychologically, energetically and spiritually. We can feel that awakening in all these different dimensions.

The experience of awakening starts in the body. After a certain time, we begin to realize that this is not only happening in our body, but that we are being assisted or aided by the cosmic forces; therefore, there is a cosmic connection as well. There is a saying by Kabirdas, “The earthen pot containing water is put inside water. The water is contained in the pot and the water is around the pot. The only difference is the pot has given an identity to the water.”

In Hindi this is:

*Jala mein kumbha, kumbha mein jala hai,
baahar bheetara paani
Phootahi kumbha, jala jala hee samana,
baata kahe yeh jnani.*

Pitcher in water, water in the pitcher,
water outside and inside;
The pitcher breaks, water becomes one with water,
so say the wise.

Once the pot is broken, once the identity is broken, once the shell is broken, there is no difference between the water inside the earthen pot and the water around the pot.

The chakras are just a shell of individual identity: ‘I am this; I am this person. This is my particular form of experience; this is my particular way of understanding things. This is my way of doing things’. This self-orientated identity at each level becomes less and less until the shell is broken. Then we realize that ‘I am part of that cosmic reality’.

I will have to go into very deep theory in order to explain it fully. So let it be here for now.

The whole time we are here in the army we are taught PT, physical training. Does physical training contain all the exercises of yoga?

I have my doubts.

I also have my doubts, please guide me.

I would like to put an idea before all of you that physical training is different from yogic training. In PT you are trying to enhance the capacity, the stamina, or the strength and power and force of your physical body, whereas in yoga, you have to realign the energy which you generate from your PT. That is one point.

Point two. PT provides you with a good opportunity to be physically fit, but it does not provide you with an opportunity to be mentally fit.

But physical fitness has a direct relationship to mental happiness?

Yes, but just happiness is not an indication of mental health, rather it is your ability to manage the stressful situations in a positive frame of mind.

Are the exercises to the body really like exercise to the mind?

I am not denying the fact that physical health is important to mental health, but at the same time there are other dimensions of mental health which have to be catered for. Therefore, one of my humble suggestions is that, just as you have time for PT, you have half an hour for the mental aspect of yoga in the daily routine. Some training can be given to improve mental health, concentration, and some training can be given to reduce the anxiety that we experience in our day-to-day situations.

There are simple practices to do that. We can experiment anytime we feel any form of aggression, nervousness, fear or insecurity. How do we manage this in five minutes? A simple technique, even if we are standing on guard duty, even with eyes open. Standing upright and straight the person can observe the flow of natural breath. There is a special way of breathing, too. It is known as yogic breathing in which the entire capacity of the lungs is utilized. You can feel the breath moving from the navel to the throat and nostrils, and from the nostrils, from the throat, right down to the navel. Just this

observation for five minutes, even on sentry duty, will reduce the anxiety, tension, frustrations or aggression.

Let's say some people are travelling in a car, looking out the window, and are a total nervous wreck because they have to meet their superior. They don't know when the axe is going to fall on them. At that time, three minutes of such a practice will immediately bring down the state of anxiety and tension.

Of course the fitness of mind is related with the fitness of body, but not the state of the mind. State of mind and fitness of mind are different. Fitness of mind can be attributed to alertness, a quick response; that is fitness of mind. Mind as a whole is a different thing altogether. It is management of things which come up internally in adverse situations.

It is my humble submission that some time can be put aside for providing this training. This will improve the performance, this will improve the discipline, and make us feel better at the personal, individual level, and we can contribute more in the field where we are.

With asana, I can understand that the muscular power will improve, but what about damaged joints?

I'll come back to the first answer I gave, which was movement of each and every part of the body. There is a series of asanas in the Bihar School of Yoga, known as pawanmuktasana. This series is divided into two groups, anti- rheumatic and anti-gastric.

In the anti-rheumatic series, for example, there is one movement, stretching the fingers and then closing the hand tightly with the thumb inside, and again stretching and closing so each joint is being manipulated. We have seen people with deformed bones, rheumatoid arthritis and in the course of time the deformation goes away, the pain goes away, because it is not only stretching the muscles. Along with the muscles you are also moving the joint, lubricating the joint, and removing the excess calcium which has been formed in the joints. It is a matter of experimentation.

Please tell us of the fourth chakra, the heart chakra.

You want to go to the fourth class immediately without going to the first and second? Yes, you are right, there are people who teach concentration on anahata chakra, fourth, or ajna chakra, sixth. We also do that. Concentration on them provides one result and awakening of the chakras in a systematic order provides a different result. I can concentrate on my heart chakra or on my eyebrow centre for a specific reason, to improve certain conditions, to obtain certain experiences and I will get that. However, when it comes down to yoga sadhana, then the awakening of the other chakras first will lead to a greater and deeper experience when I concentrate on the higher chakras. So both systems are accepted in yoga and both systems are taught in yoga.

For short-term benefits, direct concentration on any chakra, no problem. For committed people and long-term benefits, for people who have the time and the inclination to devote to their spiritual pursuit step-by-step, the progression through the chakras is recommended.

Inauguration of Siva Darshan Yogashram

1 August 1999, Siva Darshan Yogashram, Chennai

In the awakening of the dormant human potential and in the propagation of the yogic science which is the backbone of our culture and tradition, yoga has many roles to play. Yoga is not only a tradition, a *parampara*, not only wisdom and knowledge, *vidya*, but it is also a science, *vijnana*. It is a science that deals with the harmony of the physical body, the mental self, and the awakening of the spiritual personality. At a physical and mental level, the techniques of yoga make harmony attainable, and as a spiritual subject it is an attainable science. These are the three dimensions of yoga, and from time immemorial it has been part and parcel of our civilization and our culture.

Today, the yoga that we teach has three aims – the ultimate aim being purification of the self. Before the final aim is reached, the purpose of yoga is that we should attain physical balance and equilibrium and mental concentration to give the health and balance necessary for the body and mind. Only when both of these are attained is it possible for us to be spiritually benefited.

It is said in the tradition that it is through the body that we perform our karma and our dharma: *Shariramadyam khalu dharmasadhanam*. It is during this process of following our karma and dharma that our bodies and minds become subject to the stresses and tensions that surround us and restrict the growth of our mental faculties. I do not think I have to remind you of what happens, as you have first-hand experience of stress and tension in your life. Beyond these

stresses and beyond the tensions of the material world, there is another dimension where we can experience peace, where we can experience bliss.

These two dimensions, the spiritual and the material, are like the two wings of a bird or the two legs of a human being. Both wings are necessary for birds to fly. In order to walk, both legs are necessary. If you try to walk on only one leg, you will stagger and fall. This need for the material and spiritual dimensions has been explained in yogic philosophy.

Yoga does not denounce the material or the physical aspect, yet at the same time, it informs and warns everyone that materialism without spirituality leads to suffering, and spirituality without material fulfilment leads to dissatisfaction. Therefore, the yoga inherent in our vedic and tantric traditions has stated that every individual who wishes to excel in life and develop his intellect, talents and brilliance must not only consider the material, physical, extroverted self, but also the internal, spiritual self. It is only then, that with the practices of yoga we can attain physical health, mental harmony and spiritual realization. It is for this purpose that the seers and sages of ancient India developed the science and the metaphysics of yoga.

Let me remind you that yoga is not only a group of practices that you do to alleviate yourself from physical disorders and obtain mental peace. It is not a collection of techniques that lead you to self-realization. It is a balanced lifestyle where you are aware of the values of human life and express them creatively and constructively.

We should look at the entire structure of the components of yoga, whether it be the ashtanga yoga of Patanjali in the form of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi or whether it be hatha yoga, kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, mantra yoga, nada yoga or laya yoga, there are many dimensions of yoga. In this entire realm of yoga, the physical dimension is only a tiny percentage.

Take for example the ashtanga yoga of Patanjali, the eight limbs of yoga. Out of these eight limbs, one limb is asana, one limb is pranayama. If you consider that asana and pranayama

represent only 25 percent of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga, then what about the other 75 percent? If you consider the subject of yoga in its entirety including kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, raja yoga, laya yoga, mantra yoga, bhakti yoga, hatha yoga, karma yoga, and others, then in this sequence only 5 percent deals with the harmony of the physical body.

I am saying this to give an indication that our approach to yoga has been misguided. It goes without saying that the body is of prime importance. We live and work through the body and therefore it is imperative that we maintain a healthy, harmonious body and a healthy, harmonious mind. Nevertheless, we have to change our perception and our attitude towards the principles and practices of yoga. We should have the ability to perceive it in its total light and not just concentrate on one dimension of the yogic subject.

One more thing you should remember is that there are two dimensions of yoga. The first is known as *bahiranga yoga*, the external yoga, and the second is *antaranga yoga*, the internal yoga. In *bahiranga yoga*, the practices that we perform are to be seen as a process of human effort; there is an endeavour through sadhana to attain excellence in life. The *antaranga yoga* is to be seen as experiential realization attainable through yoga. Once we have moved from the sadhana of yoga to experiencing yoga, the quality and the expressions of life change, the whole personality changes, and we become more and more human.

At the moment, we are not expressing the total potential or the total qualities of a human being. Within us there are animal instincts, human instincts and divine instincts. All three co-exist in our personalities. Housed in our bodies, in this realm of prakriti, we express the animal instincts more in the form of *raga* and *dvesha*, craving for pleasure and rejection of suffering. Our anger, our hatred, our jealousy, our frustrations are nothing but animal instincts in life.

God has surely given us, and all living creatures in this world, a body. God has given a body to some creatures which can only be seen through a microscope. An extra something that he has added in man's consciousness is the power of discrimination, *viveka shakti*, which animals do not possess.

Animals and birds possess knowledge, but not the power of discrimination, viveka. An animal or a bird understands who is a friend, enemy or master, who is a provider of food and who is a killer; yet man is often not able to differentiate between these two. Even though he possesses the power of discrimination, he is unable to use it in his life. When life is happy he is delighted, then due to the blows of fate he becomes despondent and cries.

Is this the attainment of humanity? If this is the limit of our attainment, then I have nothing further to say. Let yoga and spirituality go to the devil. Live the way you want to, but if today we accept that we have attained nothing, then we will once again have to reflect on this. We won't receive the answers just through satsang, darshan or studying the scriptures. Even the answers in the scriptures have been followed by question marks alluding to the path and no final conclusions were reached. The scriptures can inspire us to tread the path, but we have to eventually find the answers through the force of our own effort. The way we can find answers and solutions to the problems that we face in life is through the practices of yoga.

You will be surprised to learn that this concept of an integrated, awakened personality is not new; it is a very ancient concept. The World Health Organization has defined health as physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual wellbeing. That is the definition of today, and if you study the *yoga shastras*, the yogic literatures, if you read the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, you will find that yama and niyama are guidelines for our behaviour. They are disciplines and qualities which express the goodness in us, which express the positive side of a human being. With the practice of yamas and niyamas there is bound to be development of a strong moral character. Asana and pranayama are the physical dimension of yoga for the physical health and wellbeing. Pratyahara and dharana are the mental practices to attain concentration, awareness and relaxation. Dhyana and samadhi are the practices which lead to union of the individual consciousness with the transcendental consciousness.

The spiritual dimension of raja yoga is dhyana and samadhi, the mental and emotional dimension of yoga is

pratyahara and dharana, the physical dimension of yoga is asana and pranayama and the moral dimension of yoga is yama and niyama. Together, they give us an enlightened body, an enlightened mind and an enlightened spirit. Today, with the decline of values and rampant mental problems yoga comes to us as a panacea to help us evolve, to help us progress in life. It is in this light that we have to understand yoga today. This was the mandate given by our paramguru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. He was a visionary of the 1920s and was able to foresee that in the course of human life there is going to be divination, there is going to be a climb of creativity.

Although our tradition is Vedanta and we belong to the Dashnami tradition of Adi Shankaracharya, our innate emphasis in this age has not been Vedanta but yoga, for yoga is like the injection of life and after we are injected with life, we can live happily ever after. The disciples of Swami Sivananda have contributed in the dissemination of the yogic traditions and culture not only in India, but throughout the world. The contributions and the vision of our paramguru and his outstanding disciples are going to be remembered in human history.

It is in his memory that this place has been named Siva Darshan Yogashram. Everybody knows that our paramguru, Swami Sivananda, hails from this state and therefore it is fitting that we dedicate this centre to his memory and his vision for human enlightenment. It has been a great privilege and pleasure to inaugurate this ashram today. We look forward to your continual support in propagating the message of the ancient wisdom of the tradition for the welfare of humanity. The grace of God and His blessing shower upon this act of dharma so our good wishes to all of you.

From your love and affection, a tiny baby was born today. The seed of the yoga centre had already entered the womb of Madras. The spirit and soul live in the womb for nine months and today an institution has been born. We have great expectations from this child. I have faith that with the support of all of you, this baby will grow and progress on the path of duty, and will try to fulfil the needs of society.

Yoga Research

1 August 1999, Chennai

Before I go to my subject, I would like to inform you of the progress in yogic research. In order to understand yogic research for the management of physiological and psychological disorders, I would like to take you back in history to the years 1965 and 1966.

In those days, yoga was considered to be a spiritual science. In our tradition, our paramguru Swami Sivananda himself was a medical doctor of repute and eminence, an illustrious FRCS and he was practising in Malaysia. There he had his spiritual calling. He left his practice and came to Madras, but he did not go home. From the port he went straight to the train station and from there he went to Rishikesh in search of truth and enlightenment. One thing which remained with him was the seed of service, helping the people who were suffering and in need of assistance.

It was he who first started using the yogic asana and pranayama for the management of various physical and psychological, somatic and psychosomatic illnesses. People used to laugh initially, “How can we get rid of our asthma or diabetes or backache just by performing certain asanas and pranayamas?” Then, when they were helped and when they were relieved from pain, they used to think it was God’s grace and guru’s blessing. That was also right, no doubt; however, something else was working behind all this, a process that was secret for harmonizing the human body.

It was much later that our guru, Swami Satyananda was also inspired by Swami Sivananda, because our guru also had

a medical background. Although he was never trained as a doctor, he had studied medicine. With his scientific trend of mind, he was able to look into the various effects and benefits of the yogic practices for a yoga practitioner's personality and body. It was he who went out to different countries with only one purpose – to establish scientific validity, to establish the scientific dimension of the yoga practices. In the course of his travels with whatever donations he received from people, he would hire a research laboratory, some people for subjects, and investigate the effects of asana, pranayama and meditation. This effort by Paramahansa Swami Satyananda laid the foundation for scientific investigation into yogic practices. This is the background, and now about the research.

Early research

The first research was conducted on the heart in 1966. Management of heart problems through the practices of yoga was the done at the Indira Gandhi Cardiological centre in Patna by Dr Srinivasan. It was in 1966 that the first results came out showing that yoga can help manage the condition of ischaemic heart and the hypertensive personality. After this, Dr Srinivasan retired and another person took up his mantle, Dr K.K. Datey at K.E.M. Hospital, Bombay. He investigated the effects of shavasana and yoga nidra, the extended version with shavasana, on the management of hypertension. His papers are also published in many recognized international medical journals.

From that time onwards, we also started involving ourselves in yogic research. Dr N.C. Panda of Sambalpur, who later became the Director of Health Services in Orissa, conducted an extensive study on the management of diabetes. He found that in forty days, non-insulin dependent diabetes could be cured 100 percent through yogic practices. Simultaneously, while this was going on, research was being conducted in Raipur on the management of respiratory problems, specifically asthma. It was here that we first learned of the asthmatic conditions which were helped through the practices of yoga. To determine whether asthma is totally eradicated

or not, there is a system of check-up, the Ventolin challenge test, which many people took. The doctors declared that these people were totally cured of their asthmatic respiratory conditions.

While this research was being in conducted in India, our centres in two more countries, Australia and the United States, started investigating other so-called incurable diseases such as cancer. The Cancer Research Foundation of Australia, under the direction of Dr Ainslie Meares, took six cancer patients who had been given final treatment and six months to live. The doctors had told them, "Our therapies have failed; chemotherapy has failed, radiation has failed, diet has failed, everything has failed, and you only have approximately six months to live so you can now prepare for your next journey." This is took place in 1978. This doctor, Ainslie Meares, who was the director of the Cancer Research Foundation of Australia, said, "Let us give one more try. They have nothing to lose. Let them practise yoga. If it helps, they will be a winner and if it does not, it doesn't matter because they are going to go anyway." These six people who were in critical condition at the end of their life, picked up the practices of yoga. Today, Dr Ainslie Meares is no more, nor are the doctors who treated these patients; however, these patients are still alive and there are no remnants of the effect of cancer in their bodies.

Similarly in 1992, with the disease AIDS, research was conducted by a group of doctors in one hospital in London to see whether it was possible to reverse the condition in people who were HIV positive. For nine months, one hour every day, these people who were HIV positive, practised yoga under the direction of sannyasins from our centre in London. It was the doctor who gave the clean bill of health to these patients saying they are free from the effects of AIDS. This of course, has been one of the most important testimonials in the history of yoga on the scientific acceptance of yoga for the management of physical and psychological problems, this is why I spoke of physical problems.

Now let me speak about the psychological problems. I was called in the United States of America, not by any yoga

devotee or by the ashram there, but by the biggest prison in America, Saint Antoine prison. I lived there for three months as an intern, not because I committed a crime but as a yoga teacher. Every day, I was giving class to 400 convicts of the maximum security cells – and for them death is nothing, life is nothing. I used to conduct the class under the watchful eyes of jail wardens with machine guns and the room was totally bare; not even a blanket was allowed, there was no furniture, there was nothing. Just imagine a room made of a pure iron sheet, that's all.

This environment was such that one day a person said to me, “Swamiji, in this empty room, I can find fifty instruments of murder and I can murder a person in this empty room, and no one will know how I have done it!” The result at the end of the three months was such that, this type of mentality reflected in their behaviour: their aggression, their guilt, their fear, their anxiety, their paranoia, totally resolved and they become responsible citizens of the society.

I do not know if you are aware of it, but there is a project known as the ‘Prison Ashram Project’ and many of our teachers in the United Kingdom and United States of America are part of this Prison Ashram Project. It is a government project sponsored by the authorities there.

I then looked into issues of mental problems, mental hospitals as we call them in the study. There, they are known as a halfway home and I found many people in different states of mind. Some were catatonic and have no awareness of the ground around them. If they stand up, they are standing up for six hours, eight hours without movement. If their arm is up, it stays up there without bringing it down; somebody has to push it down so that they relax. Of course these people would not practise yoga but I had to make them practise it. It was very difficult. I thought, “How am I going to teach these people?” Then an idea came. I said to myself, “Niranjan, you have to be the teacher and you have to be the practitioner both.” So, I used to take one person at a time, act as a catatonic in front of them, and with my finger close their nostril for ten minutes, then the other side. Since they had no concept of

pranayama, I had to do it for them by holding their nostril and for ten minutes make them breathe through pingala nadi, for ten minutes make them breathe through ida nadi.

After two months they also started responding, and today they are part of a normal social life, and the medical profession there acknowledges that it is due to the practices of yoga that their catatonic state has changed.

Applications of yoga

I am talking of the nature of events that have happened in the field of yogic research and today at the end of the century, at the culmination of the century I am very happy to see the results of yoga. As you are aware, our head office is in Bihar. The work which is being done in Bihar by our institution happens in a very humble way. I can say with pride that we are from Bihar because today the situation is such that the government of Bihar has made it compulsory in all the medical colleges in the state, to learn yoga therapy. Our sannyasins who are medical professionals too, go to these medical colleges and teach the students and doctors the principles of yoga therapy. That is point one.

Point two. The government of Bihar has passed a resolution that all government doctors will have to learn yoga therapy. They need a certificate from the Bihar School of Yoga showing that they know yoga therapy. If they do not have our certificate, their practise licence will be revoked.

Point three. The Health Department of the government of Bihar has identified thirty-six problems and diseases which will be treated only through yoga and not by any allopathic means. We have even published a book covering these thirty-six diseases, physical problems, which the medical professionals have said will be managed only through yogic practices.

Point four. The Indian Medical Association, Bihar Branch, has recommended I.M.A. New Delhi, to include yoga as part of the MBBS syllabus.

Point five. Next year in Jaipur, there is a conference of Associations of Physicians in India in which a formal

resolution will be adopted that each doctor, apart from allopathic knowledge must know, must practise and imbibe the teachings of yoga. I will be going to that conference to give it the final shape and once this happens, it will be an achievement for this country because the answer for therapy actually evolved from this country.

When Alexander the Great came to India and the war was taking place on the banks of the Sindhu, every evening he used to see an Indian man going from soldier to soldier treating them. Alexander the Great was impressed and called that person, “Who are you?” The person said, “I am a healer.” He said, “What is your name?” The person said, “My name is Theraban.” Alexander said, “Will you come with me?” Theraban said, “I will go wherever there is suffering.” In his honour, from Theraban the word ‘therapy’ has come. It is not a Latin word, it is not an English word, it is a Sanskrit word.

Western medical science is a relatively new science; the progress was made during the first World War. Prior to that, what kind of therapy existed in the world? Modern medicine is for people to get well quickly. It is medicine for people who are struggling, to make them well quickly so that they can go to the front, so they can go to work. Modern medicine is an emergency medicine. Modern medicine is a system of healing symptoms. You have hypertension, so you take a pill. You can suppress the symptoms of hypertension but you do not cure hypertension. You have diabetes, you take tablets or inject insulin so you can temporarily regulate the condition.

Medical science is still in its infancy. How were people treated before this medical science existed? Did the people who followed the tradition of healing see the human body as something material, physical, and nothing more than that, or did they also perceive something else in the human body? It was rightly said, “Healthy mind, healthy body.” The principle of yoga therapy is the management of body and mind, plus one more factor, prana shakti. If we can manage these three things, we can be totally at ease.

Vyadhi, disease, is part and parcel of life; we can’t evade it. We can’t evade it. It says in the shastras, *Janma vyadhi jara*

mrityu – birth, disease, old age and death. These are the four permanent realities.

We think of ourselves as intellectuals, yet it is our intellect which has become the cause of our suffering and disease. We call ourselves scientific-minded people who like to know the reason, the cause, the why's and the do's and don'ts, but with this faculty, all this effort and all this potential, we are not able to understand the causes of the imbalances which effect the body mechanism. What is the use of calling ourselves intellectual beings? It is better to call ourselves foolish in place of intelligent.

Vyadhi is part and parcel of life just as old age, *jara*, is part of life, yet management of vyadhi, management of disease, is the important one. It is not the cure of disease which is important in yoga, it is the management of the problem that is important in yoga. These are the differences between cure and management. Cure: only the eminent doctors will be able to say whether it is possible or not; however, we can say, "Yes, it is possible to manage difficult and complicated situations and to provide a degree of freedom, relaxation and harmony. Sometimes that freedom is 100 percent. If it becomes 100 percent, then it is a cure. Sometimes that freedom is 20 percent and if it becomes 20 percent, then it is a help. It is not just a question of linguistics, whether we say 'managed' or 'cured'; these changes in the modern medical world today and their acceptance of the yogic tradition as a therapy remains.

Today, yoga is recognized the world over as therapy. Doctors are the rishis of the modern age and they will have to make an effort to establish the subject of yoga for the benefit of humanity. It is with this idea that I recognize them; they are the rishis of modern India.

I will tell you one more thing. Dr Shivrajan was important in the Sports Authority of India. They have started yoga training by teaching the coaches the practices of yoga and only last month, we conducted a teacher training program for the coaches who have come from all parts of the country. It is our plan that athletes will be taught the practices of yoga.

I am confident that by the time the next Olympics comes, we will be able to win some more gold medals. During some of our discussions with the coaches, they said, “Yes, yoga is something we have been lacking, something we have been missing. If we can only incorporate yoga rather than following blindly what the West does. Where is our continuity? Where is our creativity?” That is something we need to do ourselves to improve our quality, whether it be in sports or whether it be of mind. So yoga has now entered in to sports, also.

We have started the Prison Ashram Project in India as well. In twenty-four prisons in the state of Bihar and in ten prisons in the state of West Bengal, we have trained the lifers and prisoners. Out of these, we have selected six-hundred lifers whom we have trained as yoga teachers. The psychologists, the psychiatrists and psychoanalysts deputed by the government and by us have been able to take the psychological profile of these people. We have monitored the tendencies and changes in their behaviour, attitude and perception. The people who were committed to a life of crime said, “This is one of the projects which is going on as an experiment and the results of such projects will be made public in the beginning of the next millennium, next year.” The changes have been incredible. They have become more peaceful and tranquil, more compassionate and kind. They are also more responsible now and able to carry out their duty without any thought of revenge.

Our swamis had gone to Siachen glacier to experience what soldiers feel at high altitudes. The base camp is at 18,000 feet and the most forward position is at 24,000 feet. We made a program to help them manage their psychological condition. Now, can you imagine the psychological trauma that a soldier faces at a certain high altitude and in such adverse climatic conditions? We have made a successful program.

We also went to Bikaner and worked with the desert deployments, in the desert areas. Our swamis went inside the tanks to experience the heat and the claustrophobia and we made a program for them. Starting this year, we are teaching yoga to all the brigades and units of the army, not for physical fitness but for the management of their psychological make-

up. Yoga will help them excel in whatever they do, and that will be an achievement of our nation.

We have been working in the army, in medicine, in sports, in prisons and we are also working a lot in the rural areas by many different means. My intention in telling you all this is to explain the dimension and the acceptability of yoga in society today.

In 1994, I represented India at a UNESCO conference and I fought for yoga to be included in the educational system. After deliberation of three days it was decided that as a policy, seventeen countries of Europe will make yoga a part of their educational system. This policy was implemented in 1994 as an experiment. The next year again, there was a conference of UNESCO in Paris. They had again invited me to discuss the results and give the final green signal for the incorporation of yoga into the educational systems. That is another great achievement. When you look at such results which can help people, which can help society at large, which can awaken the dormant human faculty and potential, we feel the need to have proper training in yoga. Yoga today has become a household word and many people in our society are teaching yoga.

The research and the investigation in all the various areas I mentioned have been only with asana and pranayama. However, we have also done hundreds of different research projects using brain scans taken by a supersensitive equipment, Brain Electrical Activity Mapping, BEAM, and taking images of the brain in different states of relaxation, in different states of concentration.

We have conducted research into melatonin, which you as doctors will understand and appreciate. Our research is not to be confined to major areas such as sports, education, defence or health; it will be a wide ranging area, but a proper understanding and proper analysis has to be done.

Journey of discovery

I see the emergence of yoga in the last three to four decades as an indication of things yet to come. It was with this purpose, that in 1994 we established the Bihar Yoga Bharati as a

deemed university to provide education and post graduate studies in Yoga Philosophy as one subject, Yoga Psychology as another subject, Applied Yoga as a third and Yoga Ecology as a fourth. Yoga psychology begins where modern psychology ends. After all, how old is modern psychology? Since the time of Jung and Freud, for two hundred or four hundred years prior to that, what was there? You cannot say that we had no concept of the human mind, the human consciousness or how to manage human emotional or psychological problems.

Sometimes I get angry with the stiff-necked medical professionals. Why are we not able to look beyond this short span of time and what was there before? Why can't we appreciate the beauty of that? It is only in the last one hundred to two hundred years that scientific achievements have made an impact on human life, but our knowledge of science today is restricted to that period only. Yoga is such a vast subject that I personally feel science will never be able to fathom it. Science today has not yet evolved. It may evolve in one hundred, two hundred or three hundred years, but as technology evolves we will also discover new dimensions of human personality. We will discover that these dimensions are being enlightened, managed and harmonized by other practices of yoga, for human life is nothing more than a journey of discovery, discovery of what surrounds us and discovery of what is above us and discovery of what is below us.

Human life is only a journey, a search; apart from this, nothing else. What is around us? What is above us and what is under our earth? Human life is a process of purification. It is a research, only a search; life is a quest. Keep on searching and maybe I can contribute something in this search, you can contribute something; however, the tradition of searching will not be finished with my contribution, nevertheless my contribution will inspire others to carry on this quest.

It is this discovery which is the basis of yoga practices. Discovery is also the basis of science. Science without discovery is not science and yoga without discovery is not yoga. Today science is materialistic, it is looking at things from a materialistic perspective. This is the difference between

science and yoga. Science says: I need to understand how the body works, how the mind works. What is this? Can it be measured? Can it be quantified? Can it be seen?

When I think of science and yoga I have this image of a young boy at the age of fifteen or sixteen who represents science and is all eager to discover new things. And I have this image of yoga, represented by the sage with a white flowing beard, with a mature mind and an experience of life, who simply looks at this little boy, smiles, and says, “Go ahead. Satisfy yourself, but the time will come when you will realize that there is something beyond the body, there is something beyond our present understanding and the present concept of science.” It was for this reason that we established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first faculty being the faculty of Yoga Philosophy, the second faculty being the faculty of Yoga Psychology, the third faculty is the faculty of Applied Yoga and the fourth is the faculty of Yoga Ecology.

It has been proved that even in zero gravity yoga can help manage the physical conditions. Rakesh Sharma who went in to space, experimented with yoga. The Bihar School of Yoga made the yoga program. All the other areas that I have mentioned to you are also the contribution of the Bihar School of Yoga, because we want to establish yoga as more than just a spiritual science. Of course, we cannot deny that aspect for our roots are the spirit.

Consider a tree. When you see a tree, what do you see? You see the trunk, the branches, the twigs, the leaves, flowers and fruit. You say, “Oh, that is a wonderful tree.” But what is the source of life, support and nourishment of the tree? Is it the trunk? Is it the leaves? No. The source of stability, the source of nourishment, the source of life, the source of strength is hidden underground, recognized as the roots. What will happen if you dig up the soil and expose the roots? The tree will die. The roots that caused the tree to survive and maintains the tree, work as long as they are covered by earth. The same thing applies to our life. What we see as this body is the trunk of the tree. What are the senses? The jnanendriyas and the karmendriyas. They are the branches

of the tree. What are all these leaves? They are the *vasanas*, *kamanas*, thoughts, desires, aspirations, ambitions. What are the fruits? They are our attainments. If the fruit is sour, our attainment is negative. If the fruit is sweet, our attainment is creative, positive. Success and failure: failure is the sour fruit; success is the sweet fruit. What are the flowers? They are the feelings, the emotions, *bhavana*, that are inherent in everything.

The entire human personality as we perceive it in the form of indriyas, in the form of manas, in the form of buddhi, in the form of chitta, in the form of ahamkara, is only the exposed part of the tree – above the ground. The root is the spirit. Just as there is a demand from the physical body for nourishment, and just as you fulfil the demand of your physical body by eating, by drinking, by sleeping, there is a demand of the mind. The demand of your mind is *sukha*, happiness and *shanti*, peace. Nobody wants to be unhappy. Do you want to be unhappy? I do not. Nobody in the world does. The demand of mind is peace, shanti. Anybody want to have *ashanti*, absence of peace? Nobody wants ashanti. As we fulfil this demand of *sukha* and *shanti* by different means available to us, sometimes by taking a vacation, sometimes by going to the theatre, sometimes by travelling around the world, the change of mind gives relaxation. Similarly, there is a demand of the spirit as well, yet we have neglected the spirit. What is the demand of spirit? The demand of the spirit is *sanyam*.

The demand of body is food and water. Of course the body is physical, therefore the demand is physical. Food cannot be mental; water cannot be mental. Mind is subtler than the body, and here the demands are subtler. Spirit is subtler than mind and therefore, the demand has to be much more subtle. Breath is part and parcel of our life, just as the roots of the tree are part and parcel of that existence. Yoga at present, is the only subject which can understand these various demands and correct the imbalances which are caused by the absence of fulfilment. The majority of stress and the majority of the human suffering is caused because we are not fulfilled.

We have deficiency in our life and due to deficiencies we are caught up in grief. Due to deficiency, we suffer from daily mental, emotional and spiritual problems. These different areas are being investigated in the faculty of Applied Yoga.

The subject of yoga does not end here. There is a fourth department, the faculty of Yoga Ecology. You may not give much importance to it because you think, “Oh, well, ecology means something to deal with the outside, but I want to be realized. Why should I worry about the environment?” That is where we are wrong. Ecology plays a vital role in the development of human personality. It is only once all the trees are eradicated from the face of this earth that we will realize we cannot eat money. Once the last tree has been chopped down from this planet, we will realize we cannot eat money.

We can't eat money; we need food, we need grains, we need fruit. We cannot survive eating money. Earn as much as you can. We come into this world with our palms closed and we leave this world with open palms. This is our condition, then where is freedom? We came with wealth and are leaving as a poor person. We came with wealth, glory, brilliance and we are going penniless. Is this our humanity? Is this our achievement? No. Neither is this our humanity, nor our achievement. Property is not our achievement. Our achievement is to be vigilant towards life. Try as much as possible to make life fragrant and glowing and from that, the atmosphere also will become pure and harmonious.

Yoga Ecology is the subject that deals not only with the planting of this tree or management of those waters. No, it also deals with an interaction between the human and nature because nature is part and parcel of God. You call nature prakriti. You know the meaning of the word prakriti? The word 'kriti' comes from the Sanskrit root *krit* which means performance, action, movement, dynamism, motion. *Pra* is the prefix which denotes the power over which humans have no control. If you neglect prakriti you cannot evolve in spiritual life, you cannot attain moksha – I challenge you! People who do not respect prakriti, disrespect God. How can prakriti and God be different? If your eyes are open, you will

see that those who do not respect nature will never enjoy the pleasure of moksha and God does not shower his grace on them. They lead a worthless life.

Yoga Ecology is not only a subject of managing the material environment, it is a subject of connecting with the active, the dynamic, the creative force of the cosmic nature. India has given a dream to the world, *atma deepo bhava* – “provide the world with enlightened beings.” It is a challenge before us that we reshape that dream by deepening the atma. If you can live up to this challenge, you will be the sons and daughters of the seers of ancient India.

We cannot say that philosophy is for us and that yoga is the means to attain that philosophy, no. If you believe in one principle, then try to imbibe that principle and try to live that principle. That is the attainment of human life. God-realization is not the attainment of human life. It is imbibing, living and expressing the human principle that we hold dear in our life and which brings us closer to the cosmic nature – that is our dream.

Purushartha

This attainment is the process of purushartha. Our sages said, we all must have four kinds of purushartha. Purushartha for artha, purushartha for kamana, purushartha for dharma and purushartha for moksha. *Artha* means security, it is personal, it is social and it is global.

In this context, artha is not related to the wealth that we earn sitting in an office, or farming, or in business, or through swindling someone. The meaning of artha is richness, fulfilment. There is a saying, “Your wealth may be in the form of elephants and cows, chariots, gold, silver, or notes – this is all base. It is as worthless as mud if you do not have wealth in contentment.” What is meant by wealth in contentment? It means complete wealth, personal, social security which is not lacking in any way. No one feels deficient in any way. Every person in society can lift his hand up with dignity and optimism. Every person in society desires love, respect and contentment. If we acquire these three things, then the

wealth we acquire cannot be compared to the other wealth. This personal and global security is part of our effort which we need to attain. If necessary, we should be ready to change the social structure in order to survive and live the life of a human being.

The second dimension, the second purushartha is of kamana. *Kamana* is pure desire. A child has the desire to be loved by his parents. A worker has the desire to be recognized by his superior, a housewife has the desire to run the household efficiently, in professional life there is a desire to live efficiently. Everybody has kamana and fulfilment of the kamana is one of the purusharthas. As long as the kamana leads us towards the upliftment of human spirit it is acceptable, but if the kamana leads to pain, suffering, death and destruction it has to be rejected. We have been given the faculty of discrimination only for the realization of kamana. This is the only function of logic. The gift of God was logic and the only function of logic is to recognize the difference between right and wrong, the auspicious and inauspicious, the positive and negative, and to guide your life as per the mandate of the time, guide your life as per the need of the time, guide your life to attain fulfilment and attain richness. That is known as kamana purushartha.

Dharma is to live piously. We only have one life to live, so why waste it? Maybe there are rebirths. In the Sanatana tradition, the thought of *punar janma*, the thought of rebirth is there. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna has said to Arjuna, "Look, we have taken births many times but the only difference is you have no memory of it and I have all memory. You have no memory; I have memory."

Thank God we do not have memory. Thank God for the short memory which will make us awake and alert and remain ever aware that we only have one life to live and there is no changing it. We can change our clothes, we can change our house, we can change our car, we can change our husband and wife, but we cannot change our life. We have only one life to live, so live the life piously, live the life with right attitude, with right thought, with right action. That is the path of dharma.

These three attainments of artha, kamana and dharma will lead to moksha. You cannot go to the fourth class immediately, can you? Before learning the lessons of the fourth class you need to know the subject, the language, the alphabet. So how can we consider moksha, the fourth class, when we are taking our first class? Therefore, it was guided by the sages and seers that we need to start with the process of understanding, redirecting the effort and re-channelling the energy. This redirection of human effort is known as yoga. The normal human effort is known as bhoga, the normal human kamana is known as bhoga, the normal participation is known as bhoga. This world is a gift to you. In this world there are pleasures to enjoy, enjoy them, but do not lose vision of God.

The natural tendency of life is bhoga and the effort to reroute, to redirect human life is yoga so Krishna says to Arjuna again and again, in practically every sloka, “O Arjuna, become a yogi; Arjuna, become a yogi; Arjuna, become a yogi.” In order to become a yogi, Arjuna has to first make a statement. He says to Krishna, “I am your disciple, please guide me.” One has to surrender. When you read the *Bhagavad Gita* go to the point when Arjuna says to Krishna (2:7):

*Kaarpanyadoshopahatasvabhaavah
prichchhaami tvaam dharmasammoodhachetaah;
Yachchhreyah syaannishchitam broohi tanme
shishyaste'ham shaadhi maam tvaam prapannam.*

My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity; my mind is confused as to duty. I ask You: tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Your disciple. Instruct me who have taken refuge in You.

In all the previous slokas, Sri Krishna has not given even a single instruction to Arjuna. It is only when Arjuna says, “Lord, I am totally confused, please help me.” The moment Arjuna says that, Krishna begins smiling. In the previous slokas Krishna remains quiet, he does not answer. Only when Arjuna says, “Make me your disciple and remove the delusion from my mind. Guide me, O Krishna. I surrender myself

to you.” Only after this point in the *Bhagavad Gita* does the teaching of Lord Krishna begin for Arjuna.

What does this mean? You have to let go of your arrogance, *abhimana*: arrogance of your learning, wealth, position, name and fame, the arrogance of being what you are today. You have to be like water that flows from the mountain top right to the ocean. If there are barriers on the path it simply bypasses them and continues flowing; it does not fight with the obstacles. Attain the freedom to flow in life like a river, the ability to flow in life without consideration of problems you will face, without thinking about the struggles that lay ahead. This is the freedom that represents human nature, which represents moksha.

It is in this spirit that I was talking of the research into yoga and the little effort that the Bihar Yoga Bharati is doing to make yoga a part of human society. It was a very happy moment in my life when I heard that three knowledgeable, sincere and dedicated doctors have started research, looking at the benefits of yoga from the scientific perspective. I wish to convey to them a message: possibly unknowingly, you have become part of a greater yoga family and not only here, but we also look forward to welcoming you in Munger at Bihar Yoga Bharati University. Let us all work together, everybody together, to make this world a place of light, wisdom and peace through yoga. Therefore, give yoga a chance in your lives.

Sankalpa for the New Millennium

2 August 1999, Chennai

What are the qualities of a disciple, a *shishya*? The only quality required is dedication, *samarpan*, nothing more, nothing less. In times of difficulty, never lose your faith. In times of achievement and success, never lose your head. Simplicity, determination and dedication which manifest in life and, more than that, the zeal to serve, are the qualities which do not need admiration but emulation. These are the qualities that make a person a human being, whether that person be male or female. We all get caught up in our ego trips, we all get frustrated over very minor things when our egos are not satisfied. When we allow the minor things to take control of our aim and direction in life, we have a fall from which we cannot rise.

The person who is dedicated to guru, never losing belief and faith in times of achievement or times of struggle, is highly regarded and comes as an inspiration to society. The person whom you saw sweeping, locking the door, cooking, taking class, working like a servant, who does not even hesitate to clean up anyone's shit, the person who has no pride or arrogance, in that person you can see mental and spiritual balance and self-control. If possible, compare yourself and see if you have the capacity to clean anyone's shit away with your hand. If you can, I will say that you also have spiritual power in your life. The action is small but there is no hatred towards this action, only love and a detached feeling, no pride. This feeling of detachment without pride is a priceless treasure in the life of a disciple.

If you think I am wrong, open the twelfth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* and read there about the quality of a devotee, a disciple, a human being. Sannyasa is never taken after being defeated by life, regardless of what society likes to say. The person who takes sannyasa has one aim in life. He or she is trying for that one aim and on whatever day the compassion of God comes, the aim is attained. In order to achieve that aim only two things are necessary:

*Bhavaaneeshankarau vande shraddhaavishwaasroopinau;
Yaabhyaam vinaa na pashyanti siddhaah svaantasthameeshvaram.*

I bow down to Parvati and Shiva,
Who are embodiments of faith and trust.
Without them, even the adept cannot perceive God,
Although He dwells within all alike.

Ramacharitamanas, Balakanda sloka 2

Only faith and belief are needed. If there is neither faith nor belief in a person's life, even if he has supernatural power it doesn't matter, still he will fail. You will see this in the life of any saint or mahatma. Even a saint or a great personage who has reached to the higher level bows his or her head before belief and faith, before humanity, before guru, before God, but never before rudeness. If they bow before rudeness, then why be a sannyasi? With the inspiration of sannyasa we bow before God, guru and humanity, but never before rudeness. He who imbibes this teaching will become happy, prosperous and successful in life. Try to live with self-confidence and self-respect. This is the teaching of daily life and we give the same teaching in spiritual life.

Be alert for one thing. If a person teaching sannyasa says, "You have to do this, you do not have to do that," that is the biggest mistake and possibly the biggest sin also. On what basis can we train a sannyasi? "Live like that, walk like that" Do we experience that other person's life? Do we understand or know the ups and downs, the ideals and thoughts of that life? No, we don't know, we do not understand. That is why,

when we go to any spiritual institution we have to be one-pointed and always have the feeling of faith, belief, dedication and service. Just as when we go to a temple and leave our shoes outside, when entering the ashram, leave not only your shoes, but leave your ego outside the gate also. The person who enters an ashram with pride never benefits from the teaching, even after making a lot of effort.

We are not teaching you how to meet God in spiritual life, that is only a way to attract you, only a magician's trick, exhibiting magic just to attract your attention. It is what a businessman does when he gives a description of the things he wants to sell. What a sannyasi is doing is representing things in a simple way to us before we know, but when we have the desire to know, so we can take a vow, follow the path and find achievement in life.

An ashram is a sacred place where there is no place for attachment, malevolence, jealousy, temper or pride. Why do these things have a place in human life? I do not understand it even today. If I get a chance at any time to meet God, I'll ask Him about it. I know that this life is a quest, and life is a teaching. The one who is able to learn in this quest, mining experience from it, gets the underground treasure and will be called truly rich and this is the achievement of yoga in the life of an individual.

Yoga is one word, but there are different traditions in yoga. Shaivism is one word but there is Veera Shaivism, Kashmir Shaivism, and others, making ten distinct traditions of Shaivism. Shaktism is one word but there are different traditions of Shaktism. Yoga is also one word but there are different traditions of yoga. Our yoga has a distinct character, a distinct procedure which is different from that taught in other yoga centres.

The development of yoga which has happened through the Bihar School of Yoga is known as Bihar Yoga, just as the distinct aspect of Shaivism emanating from Kashmir is called Kashmir Shaivism. Bihar Yoga has a distinct character. Please do not compare Bihar Yoga with other yogas because it will create total confusion in your mind. You will say, "This person

is teaching yoga like this and you are teaching like that.” Of course we are teaching it differently because we have a distinct tradition. We do not care how other people teach yoga; that is their business. This Bihar Yoga is also known internationally as Satyananda Yoga. Look up Satyananda Yoga on the internet and see what the world of science or medicine has to say about it.

We have spoken about all the therapy and scientific research that has been done with Bihar Yoga in the different parts of the globe. Today I want to talk about how yoga can help to improve the character of an individual. You have heard about the Prison Ashram Project, about the improvement in the characters of the ‘lifers’, the people who are inside the four walls known as the prison – but what about those who are outside the four walls of the prison?

We are all imprisoned. We are all slaves to our own desires which run our lives, control our behaviour and even regulate our thoughts, emotions and perceptions. For the removal of desires, yoga advocates that we adopt voluntary self-discipline rather than remaining slaves. As long as we are slaves to our emotions, we need to learn the pleasing way of behaviour. That pleasing way is not the joyful way when it is an indication of a weak character; real joy indicates strength of character. If we aim for *sanyam*, restraint and self-discipline in life, then gradually we are able to incorporate the concepts of yama and niyama. Satya, ahimsa, asteya, brahmacharya and aparigraha are the five yamas. Shaucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya and Ishwara pranidhana are the five niyamas. They need to become an integral part of our life and then sanyam becomes fulfilling and attainable and there is absolute *santosha*, contentment and joy in oneself.

There is a time to eat, a time to sleep, a time to wake up, a time to laugh. Make these timings yourself, that is best, but if you go to sleep at one o’clock, how can you wake up at four o’clock? You see, with every habit that we have, whether it is drinking alcohol, smoking, or even sleeping late, first we have to see the cause of the habit. Why was the habit formed? How was it created? What is the mentality behind that? After all,

society does not restrict the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol has been a part of all civilizations and cultures, including ours. Alcohol was distributed during yajna and other auspicious events. It is not that alcohol is bad. If you are able to maintain a disciplined mind, then alcohol is not bad. Even science tells us today that red wine is very good for the heart. So, if it is habit-forming for someone, then why was the habit formed in the first place? Was it due to mental frustration? Was it due to anxiety? Was it due to sleeplessness? Was it due to the company that we kept? Once the reason is discovered for the formation of the habit, that reason indicates the weak aspect of your personality, and you can work on that weak aspect through the practice of yoga and overcome it.

For anybody who wishes to leave any such bad habits, first of all through meditation, you should become aware of the cause of the habit. Later on through meditation itself, you have to overcome this pre-conditioning of the nature and mind. If you look at associations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, you will see that yogic meditation has been incorporated throughout the world. I used to give classes for AA in the US and we had excellent results, not only because of the practices but also because of the support group which existed in the association. When people are able to freely discuss their own and each other's problems, they can come to the root cause of alcoholism or drug addiction or any other addiction. It is not that one becomes an addict, but once the addiction takes place one tends to forget the reason behind resorting to that particular thing in the first place, and thus we become slaves of our actions. In the management of any of the addictions that bind us, I have found meditation, self-introspection and self-reflection are very good tools.

Now, every year we are holding yatra in different districts of Bihar, which means we travel to different villages, teach yoga there for some time and then move on to the next. We have been working on the integration of yoga in rural areas and we are witness to a great change. With no food in their stomachs, with no clothes, people are sitting for the sadhana given to them during the yatra. Some people took bags

of rice, dal, food grain and cane sugar for them. If yoga can create such a dramatic change in the lives of innocent people and they can become so faithful, it is our duty to help them. Such experiences made us ready to sacrifice even the two dhotis we wear if it will help the innocent. I hope you understand my feeling about this. This may be a gain for yoga but more than that it is an asset for humanity.

Swami Sivananda has also conveyed this. He used to say, “The practices of hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and the ashtanga yoga of Sage Patanjali are the external dimension of yoga. That is sadhana as taught in yoga, but beyond that there is another dimension of yoga.” The eight limbs of yoga beyond Patanjali are called the ashtanga yoga of Swami Sivananda.

Patanjali’s ashtanga yoga is yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. These are the areas in which you make an effort. What is the ashtanga yoga of Swami Sivananda? First is to serve. That is an achievement of yoga, it is not a command, it is not a mandate. Do not be offended if I say that yoga’s greatest asset does not lie in the samadhi state. The greatest achievement of yoga is gained neither in nirvana nor salvation, nor in *Bhagavat darshan*, the vision of God. It is not gained in samadhi following dhyana, but in the service rendered after dhyana.

Swami Sivananda used to say, “Serve!” If you see the logo of the Divine Life Society, the motto inscribed there is “Serve, love, give, purify, be good, do good, meditate, realize.” The ashtanga yoga of Swami Sivanandaji, his eight-fold yogic path, can be realized after Patanjali’s yoga and not before, for what service could we have given previously? This resolve was actualized in Sivananda Math, which is dedicated to these ideals of serving, loving, giving, purifying, being good, being kind, meditating or becoming one-pointed, and ultimately the ideal of self-realization.

These eight limbs taught by Swami Sivananda are the principles his tradition has imbibed. This is what makes the tradition of Bihar Yoga-Satyananda Yoga unique. Everybody is too bound up in their own mental phobias and limited

dimension of existence. Swami Vivekananda used to say, “Those who live for others really live and those who live for themselves do not live.” After all, how can you become perfect? How can I become perfect? How can you define perfection? The moment you define perfection you are limiting it.

Omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence are the three qualities of perfection. Perfection represents truth, the auspicious quality inherent in everything and the beauty that underlies all of life. Perfection is not uniformity – perfection is diversity. Imagine if you had a garden consisting of only one type of flower. You might enjoy it for a while but after some time you would get bored with it. A garden is a garden only when there is a variety of flowers and plants in it. A world is a world only when there is struggle and conflict, yoga and bhoga. If you dream of a perfect world, of a utopian world, keep on dreaming; it will never be a reality in life. It will never be a reality in prakriti. It will never be a reality in any yoga.

Do not long for Satya, Treta or Dwapara Yuga. Appreciate Kali Yuga. What was Satya Yuga? It was the age of terrorists – it was not the golden age. I beg the pardon of all the thinkers and seers, but I differ from their beliefs. Satya Yuga was not really the golden epoch in history; it is Kali Yuga that is the golden age. Satya Yuga was the epoch of terrorists, and to such an extent that God had to come down sometimes in the form of a fish, sometimes as a turtle, sometimes as a boar, as a dwarf, as a half-lion half-man. At least five or six incarnations became necessary during just that one epoch or *yuga*. How can it be called the golden epoch? Just think it over yourselves. How can an epoch in which God had to incarnate Himself repeatedly to restore moral order, be called the golden epoch?

In the next single epoch there were two incarnations, Parashurama and Rama. In the next age only one incarnation took place, that of Sri Krishna – so there is an improvement. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (4:7):

*Yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya glaanir bhavati bhaarata;
Abhyutthaanam adharmasya tadaatmanam srijaamyaham.*

I incarnate again and again for restoration of moral order, Bharata (Arjuna); I am born from age to age to establish dharma or righteousness on a firm footing.

Just count the number of times God had to incarnate in Satya Yuga, but in Kali Yuga there is no need for Him to incarnate because His work is being done by His emissaries. All the saints and mahatmas are doing His work. Today there is a resurgence of terrorists like those of Satya Yuga, but they are not as powerful as those of the past. Therefore, I tell you not to dream of Satya Yuga.

Let me tell you one more thing. In Satya Yuga, people had to do *tapas*, penance, for thousands of years to gain a glimpse of God. Have you not read about this in the Puranas and other scriptures and historical accounts? In Kali Yuga there is no need to do *tapas* for thousands of years. God appears during the average lifespan of a human being, you do not need to wait for ten thousand years. There is also no need for penance, austerities or *tapas*. God Himself has assured us that in Kali Yuga only one *sadhana* is enough to attain God and that is *Naam smarana*, remembrance of God's name. Keep repeating God's name and one day, when the connection is made, the electric current will flow and light the bulb automatically. This is the power of God's name in the Kali Yuga. Now, you decide for yourselves which is the better yuga.

I was explaining to you what Swami Sivanandaji's ashtanga yoga is. In his yoga, God-realization is not the only achievement of yoga. There is a bhajan in English composed by him which says:

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,
Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity.
Practise daily these eighteen 'ities'
You will soon attain immortality.

Brahman is the only real entity
Mr So-and-so is a false non-entity
You will abide in eternity and infinity
You will behold unity in diversity.

What is the state of the human mind and human consciousness after having attained meditative perfection? Do we go to God straight away? Swami Sivananda says no, and in the song he explains what you have to establish yourself in, what you have to make a part of your practical life, not only your philosophical life, after you have attained perfect meditation. Swami Sivananda used to say, "After meditation, you need to incorporate the attainments of meditation in your daily life to improve your karma, your samskaras and the quality of life." And he lists the attainments of meditation in these eighteen 'TTIES', starting with serenity. After you have attained these, he says you attain immortality.

Immortality is your connection with God. Your connection with God is the thing which becomes immortal. It is not that the body becomes immortal. No, the body cannot become immortal. The body has a span of life and it disintegrates after that. Whether you run your car or even if you keep your car in the garage without running it for your whole life, you will still have to change it. Can you call this state immortality?

Everyone who comes into this world has to go, whether a prince or a pauper, therefore, immortality is not connected with the body. Immortality refers to the principle of light that is awake in all of us. The concept of immortality is not the immortality of body but realization, awareness, knowledge and wisdom. The immortal nature is the connection between the individual and the divine. Only when the light is off can you see the bulb; once the light begins to shine, the bulb becomes alight and you can't see the bulb. And for the light to shine the only thing needed is the flow of the current.

I am saying this to you now because some people have asked the question, "How can we attain God-realization?" To those people I say that God-realization is a symptom of having attained peace in your human nature, in your human

personality. It is not an achievement. The moment you attain peace in your nature, you realize the existence of God in your life, and that's it. It's as simple as that.

It is important to have faith, because although the light may not be shining from the bulb, if you try holding the wires you will get a shock from the current. You cannot say, "The light is not shining, therefore there is no electricity in the wire." It is the same situation with God also. Just because we can't express that light in our life we cannot say that God does not exist. It is just that our switch is off and when we try to turn on the switch we find that a lot of carbon has accumulated. We have to clean the accumulated carbon and that cleansing process is called yoga. However, this process is an amenity which only specialists or experts who themselves have realized the truth, are in a position to inspire other people to take up.

We are coming to the conclusion of one millennium, and we are beginning another millennium. This auspicious moment is going to come only once in this life. We won't be around to see the beginning of the next century, let alone the beginning of the next millennium, so how should we spend the end of this century and the beginning of a new millennium so that it becomes a memorable event? Not by listening to tales – we have been doing that all our lives – but by being in the presence of an enlightened being.

You have been listening to scriptures and folk tales and you can do it today and tomorrow also, but satsang with a saint is not an everyday occurrence. It is great good fortune to be in the company of an enlightened being. To derive inspiration and wisdom from such good company is the best way to bid goodbye to the old century and the old millennium, and to welcome the new century and the new millennium.

There is one more point. Follow the teachings that the creator has given. Do you know them? There is a story in the Upanishads that the demons, devas and mankind sent emissaries to the creator, Prajapati Brahma, for guidance. The creator was in the state of meditation and when he realized that three emissaries had come, he said only one syllable, "Da," after which he was silent.

Now, the devas, the gods or divine beings, began to think, “What is the meaning of this ‘da’?” They associated it with their lifestyle and said, “Well, we are the devas, for us there is too much of the five-star lifestyle. Let there be *indriya daman*, restraint of the senses.” And the devas took the message as *daman* – *indriya daman*.

The demons, thought about it and said, “In our life there is a lot of violence and crime, murder, hatred and destruction, so we should learn to have *daya*, compassion.” So they took this message from that single syllable ‘da’.

The human beings also thought about what to do. They came to the conclusion that as humans, it is in our nature to accumulate things, so what do we need to do? In order to overcome the selfish nature, we need to give. For them the message became *daan*.

When Prajapati Brahma learned that these three kinds of beings had come to these conclusions, he gave his sanction. He said, “Yes, you are right and that is exactly what I want you to practise: *indriya daman* for the devas, *daya* for the demons, and *daan* for the human beings.”

Let the last days of this century be days of *daan*, giving, and not of accumulation. Our guru, Swami Satyananda, has said many times that there would be no poverty in India if every affluent Indian family were to take care of the needs of a poor family; we would be as affluent as any of the western countries. In order to bring in this social change, we have to follow the precept of Prajapati Brahma, and that is to learn to give.

Therefore, today let this be a *sankalpa* from me to you: “I will devote the last day of the century only to giving and not to receiving.” Let that be your *tapasya*, let that be your contribution to the betterment of human civilization. If you can do it, together we shall witness the dawn of a new millennium with peace in our hearts, happiness in our minds and contentment pervading the whole atmosphere.

If you feel that this is difficult to do and that you can’t do it because you have certain obligations and commitments which you can’t change, then bring here whatever you want to give

on that day and we will give it on your behalf. Distributing daan, gifts, is one of the activities of Sivananda Math, the institute which is dedicated to Swami Sivananda's principles of serving, loving, giving and purifying.

I am sure that the swamis will be able to assist you in deciding what you can give. There is a saying, "If you give a fish to a hungry person, that fish will last only one meal, but if you teach that person how to earn his living and give him a means of livelihood, it will benefit him throughout his life." Therefore, do not give fish to a hungry person but teach him how to fill his stomach so he will never starve. That has to be the form of charity. I am not saying that you cannot give money. If you want to, you are welcome, but that is not the primary requirement. What you have to give is something which can help him for a long time in his life.

I want all of you to take a sankalpa, and please spread the message that this is our guruji's sankalpa, not mine. I am simply conveying it to you. You have a family – when you buy shoes for your two children, do not buy only two pairs of shoes, buy for a third child whom you do not know. If you buy clothes for your children, do not buy just for your two, buy for a third also. You do not know who the third child is, or where you will find him or her, but include one invisible child. Likewise, include a sari for one person, a dhoti and kurta for one person, then find a needy and deserving person and give them the clothes without any hesitation, and derive joy and bliss from seeing that beautiful smile of satisfaction on their lips.

You do not know what poverty is. We have seen it in the villages. In some huts, no cooking fire burns. There is not a grain of food to eat and people die of starvation. That is called poverty. If you have five rupees in your pocket give at least one rupee to those in whose house no fire has been lit and no food cooked for four to five days. Try to remove this poverty.

We have enough money, enough resources for ourselves, but what about the poor and the needy, the hungry and the helpless? What about those who have nobody to turn to for

help and who have nothing? Go to their aid. This is yoga. It is only then that God's grace will come down to you. This is my promise and I may even give up my guru if need be, but I will fulfil this promise and this sankalpa. We will have to think one day about how to curb our own selfishness and start thinking of others. It is only then that our nations and our people will progress.

We have to fulfil this one resolve. It is not a personal resolve, not the resolve of you and me alone. This is the resolve of an awakened man. Is the awakened man only one individual? No, the awakened man demonstrates the potential of the whole of humanity. Do cooperate with us, do contribute to make this resolve come true. I trust in full faith that dharma will protect you, enlighten your life and you will gain the grace of God.

Glossary

Abhayam – fearlessness

Abhimana – pride; egoism

Abhinivesha – fear of death; one of the five causes of affliction (kleshas) described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*

Adharma – disharmony; not fulfilling one's natural role in life; unrighteousness

Adhibhautika – suffering which proceeds from extrinsic causes, such as other people, beasts, birds or inanimate objects; in Samkhya philosophy, one of the three miseries caused by avidya (ignorance)

Adhidaivika – extrinsic suffering due to natural calamities and environmental hardship; in Samkhya philosophy, one of the three miseries caused by avidya (ignorance)

Adhyatmika – pertaining to the atma (soul); suffering proceeding from intrinsic causes, such as disorders of the body and mind, unconscious psychological frustration or emotional tension; one of the three miseries caused by avidya (ignorance)

Adrishtajnana – unmanifest, unknown or unconscious knowledge

Advaita – non-duality

Agni tattwa – fire element, fire principle

Ahamkara – faculty of ego; awareness of the existence of 'I'; one of the four parts of the antahkarana or inner instrument

Ahara – craving food or nourishment; third basic instinct

Ahimsa – non-violence in thought, word and deed; one of the yamas; according to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*

Ajapa japa – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra; meditation practice in which mantra is coordinated with breath

Ajna chakra – psychic centre or vortex situated at the medulla oblongata at the top of the spinal column; seat of intuition; higher knowledge; third eye

Ajnana – ignorance of reality; non-cognizance; unawareness; one of the five kleshas described in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*

Akasha tattwa – space element

Anahata chakra – psychic or pranic centre situated in the spine behind the sternum; associated physically with the cardiac plexus, heart and lungs, mentally with emotion, especially love, and spiritually with atma, the spirit

Ananda – pure bliss; natural state of consciousness

Anandamaya kosha – sheath or body of bliss; the innermost sheath of the embodied spirit

Anasakta bhava – feeling, attitude of non-attachment

Anasakti – non-attached; unaffected, emotionally detached; indifference to all sense experiences

Annamaya kosha – sheath or body of matter; the physical body

Antar darshan – inner vision

Antahkarana – inner instrument; experienced or manifest mind, consisting of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara

Antar mouna – inner silence; meditative technique belonging to the fifth step of raja yoga (pratyahara)

Antaranga yoga – expressive internal yoga; internal stages of raja yoga: pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi

Anubhava – experience; memory

Aparigraha – non-possessiveness; one of the five yamas of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*

Apas tattwa – water element

Artha – prosperity; material need; accomplishment; effort to obtain emotional, social, or even financial security

Asakti – attachment

Asanga shastra – weapon of detachment; freedom from ties

Asana – a specific yoga posture; used in hatha yoga to channel prana, open the chakras and remove energy blocks; in

raja yoga, a physical posture in which one is at ease and in harmony with oneself

Ashram – place of spiritual practice and growth through internal and external labour; hermitage; dwelling or abode of asceticism and spiritual practice

Ashtanga yoga – the eight limbs of yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and Samadhi

Ashuddha – impure

Astra – divine weapon

Atma – the self beyond mind and body; principle of life; highest reality; Supreme Consciousness; spirit; soul

Atmanivedana – self-surrender; dedicating one's entire self to the divine

Avastha – state of consciousness or condition of the mind

Bahiranga yoga – external, practice based yoga; external stage of sadhana, including yama, niyama, asana and pranayama

Bandha – psycho-muscular energy locks which close the pranic exits (like throat, anus); psychic locks that concentrate the flow of energy in the body at one point or plexus

Bhagavad Gita – 'divine song'; Sri Krishna's discourse to his disciple Arjuna delivered on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the commencement of the great Mahabharata war; one of the source books of Hindu philosophy; containing the essence of the Upanishads and yoga

Bhakta – devotee

Bhakti – complete devotion to the higher reality of life

Bhakti yoga – branch of yoga in which emotional energy is channelled towards a higher reality of life; a systematic path with nine stages which expand; strengthen; and purify the emotions

Bhava, bhavana – feeling; attitude; inclination or disposition of mind

Bhaya – fear

Bhoga – sensual enjoyment; external experience

Bhranti – confusion; mistake; false idea or impression, wrong notion, delusion

Bija – seed; seed state; source, origin

Brahma – the first god in the cosmic trinity; the Creator of the universe

Brahma granthi – psychic block or knot situated in mooladhara chakra, symbolizing material and sensual attachment

Brahman – ever-expanding, limitless consciousness; name of Supreme Consciousness or cosmic intelligence according to Vedanta philosophy; monistic concept of absolute reality

Brahmi vritti – spiritual aspect of the vrittis; the self-aware, individual consciousness

Buddha – literally, ‘the enlightened one’; commonly referring to the founder of Buddhism

Buddhi – discerning; discriminating aspect of mind; higher intelligence; intuitive aspect of mind

Chakra – circle, wheel or vortex; pranic/psychic centre; confluence point of energy flows (nadis) in the body; the seven major chakras for descent of divine energy or for human evolution are sahasrara, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara

Chetana – consciousness

Chidakasha – the space of consciousness; the inner space visualized in meditation behind the closed eyes or in the region of ajna chakra

Chintan – thinking, thought; worry, care, anxiety

Chitta – individual consciousness, including the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; storehouse of memory or samskaras

Chitta vritti – manifestations of the mind; disposition or state of mind; inclination

Daan – unconditional giving

Darshan – a glimpse; vision; direct perception

Daya – compassion; kindness to all

Dehadhyasa – identification with the physical body

Deva – being of light; divine being

Devata – form of divine dignity or power; divine being representing the higher states of evolution

Devi – female deity, goddess

Dharana – practice of concentration or complete attention; sixth stage of ashtanga yoga described in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* as holding or binding the mind to one point

- Dharma** – the natural role one plays in life; ethical law; duty; the laws or fundamental support of life; righteousness; one of the four purusharthas
- Dhyana** – spontaneous state of meditation; one-pointedness of mind through concentration on either a form, thought or sound; absorption in the object of meditation; seventh stage of Sage Patanjali's ashtanga yoga
- Digambara avadhoota** – 'sky-clad' or naked ascetic; one who is free from worldly attachments and established beyond body consciousness
- Dosha** – three humours of the body described in Ayurveda: mucus (kapha), bile (pitta) and wind (vata); their imbalance prevents the flow of energy in sushumna nadi
- Drashta** – witness; uninvolved observer; seer; the inner self
- Dukha** – suffering; pain
- Dwesha** – repulsion; aversion
- Ekagrata** – one-pointedness of mind, fourth of the five states of mind where pure sattwa guna predominates enabling concentrated or meditative states of mind
- Gheranda Samhita** – traditional text on hatha yoga by Sage Gherand; mentions physical and mental health benefits of various practices, conceiving on yoga as a complete therapy and spiritual structure
- Goraksha Samhita** – ancient hatha yoga text, ascribed to Yogi Gorakhnath, founder of the Nath sect
- Granthi** – psychic knot on the sushumna nadi hindering the upward passage of kundalini; the three granthis are Brahma granthi, Vishnu granthi and Rudra granthi
- Guna** – quality; the three gunas, qualities or aspects of prakriti (nature) are sattwa, rajas and tamas
- Hatha yoga** – system of yoga for attaining physical and mental purity and balancing the pranas in the body
- Himsa** – anything which disrupts the natural flow of human perception and consciousness; violence, killing, harm, injury
- Hridayakasha** – psychic space of the heart centre where the creative hues of emotion are observed; experienced between manipura and vishuddhi chakras, associated with anahata chakra

Ichha – wish, desire, will

Ida nadi – a major pranic channel running from mooladhara chakra to ajna chakra, governing the left side of the body and the right side of the brain

Indriya – sense organ; power of the senses

Ishwara pranidhana – complete dedication to higher consciousness; one of the niyamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*

Jagrat – the waking state; dimension of consciousness related to the senses and the phenomenal material universe

Jala tattwa – water element

Janma – birth; origin; creation

Japa – a meditation practice involving repetition of a mantra

Jara – old age

Jati – lineage, race, caste; community; relative

Jiva – principle of life; individual or personal soul; living being

Jivanmukta – liberated in life; an enlightened person, a person purified by true knowledge of the Supreme Reality and freed from future births while still embodied

Jnana – knowledge, cognition, wisdom; higher knowledge derived from meditation or from inner experience

Jnana yoga – yoga of knowledge and wisdom attained through spontaneous self-analysis and study of the scriptures; leading a discriminative lifestyle, living with wisdom

Jnanendriya – organ of sense perception and knowledge; five in number – ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin

Jyotirlingam – natural oval-shaped stone worshipped as Shiva; symbol of pure consciousness

Kama, kamana – emotional, sensual fulfilment; love; lust; one of the four purusharthas

Kapha – mucus, phlegm, one of the three humours (doshas) described in Ayurveda; associated with the water element

Karma – action and result; law of cause and effect

Karma sannyasa – householder sannyasa; renunciation combined with duty

Karma yoga – yogic path of action; union with the supreme consciousness through action; action without attachment to the fruits of action; action performed with meditative awareness

Karma kanda – the part of the Vedas that relates to sacrificial rules and ceremonial acts on the physical level

Karmaphala – the fruit, result or consequence of any deed

Karmendriyas – motor organs; five physical organs of action: hands, feet, vocal cords, excretory and reproductive organs

Karta – doer; one who performs actions with the inner attitude ‘I am doing’

Kartavya – duty; that which ought to be done

Klesha – pain, affliction, suffering; five afflictions or causes of suffering described in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*, viz avidya (ignorance), asmita (sense of ‘I’ identity), raga (attraction), dwesha (aversion), and abhinivesha (fear of death); in yoga the five kleshas are the sources of all suffering or troubles, with ignorance being considered the chief klesha

Kosha – sheath or body; a dimension of experience and existence; the five koshas are: annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijñanamaya kosha, and anandamaya kosha

Kriya – action; cleansing practice (shatkarma); practice of the system of kriya yoga

Kriya yoga – practices designed to hasten spiritual evolution

Krodha – anger; aggression

Kumbhaka – internal or external retention of the breath

Kundalini shakti – also referred to as ‘kundalini’; the evolutionary energy in a human being; spiritual energy; Devi described as the potential energy of a human being dormant in mooladhara chakra, which when awakened, awakens the chakras, resulting in progressive enlightenment

Lingam – symbol; a naturally formed oval stone; often means shivalingam

Lobha – greed

Loka – locationless dimension; plane of existence

Maha – great; noble

Mahabharata – epic of ancient India said to be composed by Sage Vedavyasa, involving the history and consequences of the great battle between the Kaurava and Pandava princes

Mahaprana – cosmic, universal prana

Mahavira – a spiritual master contemporary to Buddha who exemplified and taught non-violence, compassion and restraint; Jain sect developed from his teachings

Maithuna – physical union; the first basic instinct; copulation; fusion of male and female energies

Manana – reflection, the second of the three steps on the path of knowledge in vedantic sadhana

Manas – finite mind, rational mind; the mind concerned with senses, thought and counter-thought; perception, intelligence; one of the four parts of the antahkarana or inner instrument

Manipura chakra – literally, ‘city of jewels’; psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the navel; associated with the solar plexus and digestive organs and mentally with willpower; source of vitality and energy

Manomaya kosha – sheath or body of mental experience

Mantra – sound vibrations which liberate the mind and expand the consciousness when repeated

Maya – means by which Brahman creates the phenomenal world; power of creation; illusive power; in Vedanta philosophy, the two powers of maya are the power of veiling, and the power of projection; in Samkhya philosophy, another name for Prakriti

Moha – delusion; infatuation

Moksha – liberation from the cycles of birth and death and the illusion of maya; one of the four purusharthas

Mooladhara chakra – the lowest psychic/pranic centre in the human body; situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women; associated mentally with the instinctive nature; spiritually it is the seat of kundalini

Mouna – silence; measured speech

Mrityu – death, one of the three inevitable conditions of life

Mudra – gesture; psychic, emotional, devotional, and aesthetic gesture; attitude of energy intended to link individual pranic force with universal or cosmic force

Mukti – liberation from the chain of birth and death and from the illusion of maya

Muni – one who contemplates; one who has conquered the mind; one who maintains silence or stillness of mind

Nada – sound; subtle sound vibration heard in the meditative state

Nadi – channel of energy, psychic current

Nauli – abdominal massaging; one of the shatkarmas in which the rectus abdominis muscles are contracted and isolated vertically

Nidra – fourth instinct; deep sleep; isolation from the mind and senses

Nirlipta – the state of being unattached

Nirodha – control; cessation

Nirvana – cessation of suffering; final liberation or emancipation in Buddhist thought

Nishkama – without desire, expectation or personal interest

Nisswartha karma – selfless work

Niyama – observance of rules or rules of personal discipline to render the mind tranquil in preparation for meditation; second stage of ashtanga yoga in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*: shaucha (purity), santosha (contentment), tapas (austerity), swadhyaya (self-study) and Ishwara pranidhana (surrender to God)

Om – the universal cosmic mantra representing the four states of consciousness; the sound indicating the Supreme Reality or Brahman; conveys concepts of omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence

Paramatma – Cosmic Soul or Consciousness; Supreme Spirit

Pashu bhava – instinctive personality

Patala – seven levels of consciousness at a lower level than the human dimension: atala, vitala, sutala, rasatala, talatala, mahatala and patala

Patanjali – author of the *Yoga Sutras*; an ancient rishi who codified the system of raja yoga, including ashtanga or eight limbed yoga

Pingala nadi – a major pranic channel in the body which conducts the dynamic pranic force manifesting as prana shakti from the right side of mooladhara chakra; criss-crossing the spine through the major chakras to the right side of ajna chakra

Pitta – bile, one of the three humours (doshas) described in Ayurveda; associated with the fire element

- Poornata** – fulfilment; perfection
- Prajna** – knowledge with awareness; intuition
- Prakasha** – light, brightness, shining, brilliance
- Prakriti** – nature; manifest and unmanifest nature composed of the three gunas; the active principle of manifest energy; counterpart of purusha in Samkhya philosophy
- Pramana** – right knowledge; knowledge based on, or proved by, direct sensation or cognition
- Prana** – vital energy force sustaining life and creation; permeating the whole of creation and existing in both the macro-cosmos and micro-cosmos
- Pranotthana** – awakening of the pranas in the different nadis and chakras; a stage of awakening preparatory to kundalini awakening
- Pranamaya kosha** – energy sheath, or vital pranic body; the sheath covering the self which is composed of pranic vibration and the rhythm of pranic forces
- Pranayama** – a series of techniques using the breath to control the flow of prana within the body
- Prarabdha karma** – actions already performed which, like arrows shot from the bow, cannot be retrieved; previous karmas which have matured enough to give fruit; that portion of one's actions which is bound to fructify in the present life and cannot be averted
- Pratyahara** – restraining the sensory and motor organs; withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects; training the senses to follow the mind within; fifth stage described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*
- Pratyaya** – memory, archetype; seed or impression in the field of consciousness which does not disappear even in the first stages of samadhi; content of mind
- Prem** – love, affection; tenderness; regard
- Prithvi tattwa** – earth element
- Punar janma** – rebirth
- Puranas** – eighteen ancient texts containing the earliest mythology of the tantric and vedic traditions

Purusha – literally, ‘the one who lives in the city (of the body)’; the soul; pure consciousness according to Samkhya philosophy, undefiled and unlimited by contact with prakriti or matter; can also refer to a man or a human being

Purushartha – human attainment; self-effort; the four basic needs or desires to be fulfilled in life, viz artha (wealth), kama (desire), dharma (duty), moksha (liberation)

Raga – passion; attachment to what gives pleasure

Raja yoga – the supreme yoga; union through control of the mental processes and concentration of mind; the most authoritative text is Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* which contains ashtanga yoga, the eightfold path

Rajas – one of the three gunas or attributes; dynamism; state of activity; creativity combined with full ego involvement

Ramacharitamanas – a version of the *Ramayana* written by Tulsidas, composed in poetic form

Ramayana – one of the most famous ancient Indian epics, relating the life of Rama, the most widely known version was composed by Valmiki, containing about 24,000 verses in seven chapters

Rig Veda – oldest of the four Vedas, the most ancient sacred books of the eternal dharma; contains hymns to the deities or guardians of the law, such as Agni, Varuna, Indra and Mitra and presents nature as a living force working in the interests of humanity

Rishi – seer; realized sage; one who contemplates or meditates on the Self

Rudra – a form of Shiva; one who acquires a fierce form

Rudra granthi – psychic knot within ajna chakra which symbolizes attachment to siddhis or higher mental attributes; as this psychic block is overcome, the sense of personal identity ceases to stand in the way of one’s identification with the cosmic consciousness

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly for the attainment of inner experience

Sadhu – good or holy person, sage, saint

Sadvichara – right enquiry; appropriate thinking

Sadvyavahara – right, appropriate behaviour

Sahasrara chakra – ‘thousand-petalled lotus’; abode of Shiva or super-consciousness; highest chakra or psychic centre, it symbolizes the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms and is located at the crown of the head

Sakara – with form; manifest

Sakshi – that which observes the phenomenal reality without being affected; witness

Samadhi – culmination of meditation; state of unity with the object of concentration and the universal consciousness; balanced wisdom; the eighth stage of raja yoga

Samarpan – surrender; dedication of oneself

Samhita – collection of mantras and rules; texts on yoga; vedic texts

Samkhya – one of the six systems of Indian philosophy; spiritual science based on the division of all existence into the two eternal principles of purusha and prakriti, and the twenty-three elements of creation; the spiritual basis of the yoga system

Sampradaya – sect

Samskara – mental impression stored in the subtle body as an archetype; the impressions which condition one’s nature, causing one to react or respond in a certain way

Sanatana dharma – system of eternal values underlying the vedic civilization

Sankalpa – positive resolve; purpose, aim, intention; willpower

Sankalpa shakti – the power of one-pointed awareness, one-pointed desire, one-pointed will

Sannyasa – dedication; complete renunciation of the world, its possessions and attachments

Santosh – contentment; satisfaction; one of the five niyamas in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*

Sanyam – restraint, self-discipline

Sat karma – literally ‘true action’; doing good acts; any act that helps another person

Satsang – gathering in which the ideals and principles of truth are discussed; association with the wise and the good

Sattwa – one of the three gunas or attributes of nature; state of luminosity, harmony, equilibrium and purity

Satya, satyam – truth; speaking the truth; being truthful to oneself; honesty; one of the yamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* as a preliminary practice of yoga

Shakti – power; ability, capacity, strength, energy; primal energy; manifest consciousness; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness; in Hindu mythology Shakti is often symbolized as a goddess

Shankara – name of Shiva, referring to his auspicious nature; manifest form of Shiva

Sharira – the body (of animate or inanimate objects); the constituent element; bodily strength

Shastra – an authoritative treatise on any subject, particularly science and religion; sacred book

Shatkarma, shatkriya – the six hatha yoga techniques of purification: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhathi and trataka

Shaucha – cleanliness; one of the niyamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* as a preliminary practice of yoga

Shiva – state of pure consciousness, individual and cosmic; original source of yoga; auspicious, benevolent one; name of the god of the Hindu trinity who is entrusted with the work of destruction; destroyer of the ego and duality

Shivalingam – oval-shaped stone; symbol of Lord Shiva; symbol of consciousness

Shoonya – void; state of transcendental consciousness

Shubha – auspicious

Siddha – perfected being; one who has developed his/her psychic and pranic capacity to the point of mastery

Sloka – verse

Smriti – memory

Soham – mantra used in ajapa japa; said to be the unconscious repetitive prayer produced by the breath itself

Spandan – movement, vibration; cosmic vibration, primordial pulsation; dynamic aspect of Shiva

Sthira – stable

Sthitaprajna – one whose wisdom is firmly established and does not waver; who is unmoved by the dualities (eg pleasure and pain, gain and loss) and is unshakeably established in super-consciousness

Sthoola sharira – gross, physical body; annamaya kosha

Sukha – pleasure, enjoyment

Sukshma sharira – subtle body composed of pranamaya, manomaya and vijnanamaya koshas; part of the subconscious which manifests in the dream state

Sushumna – central energy flow (nadi) in the spine; conducts the kundalini or spiritual force from mooladhara chakra to sahasrara chakra; situated in the spinal cord of the human body, it opens when balance is achieved between ida and pingala nadis

Swabhava – one's own essential nature

Swadhisthana chakra – second psychic/pranic centre; located in the coccyx; associated with the sacral plexus and governing the uro-genital system; storehouse of subconscious impressions

Swadhyaya – self-observation; self-study; continuous conscious awareness of what one is doing; one of the niyamas recommended by Sage Patanjali's Yoga Sutras; study of the scriptures and texts of yoga

Swapna – second dimension of consciousness; subconscious realm of mind, state of dreaming, the mind is looking inwards, seeing the internal experience, not the external objects

Tamas – one of the three gunas or attributes of nature; inertia, stability; ignorance, darkness; unwillingness to change

Tantra – most ancient universal science and culture which deals with the transition of human nature from the present level of evolution and understanding to a transcendental level of knowledge, experience and awareness; a particular path of sadhana, including mantra, yantra and other esoteric practices

Tapasya – practice of austerity, self-discipline and purification

Tattwa – true essential nature; element, primary substance; the five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth)

Tejas – luminosity, aura; warmth, heat; self-luminosity, self-effulgence

Turiya – fourth dimension of consciousness; super-consciousness; simultaneous awareness of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind which links and transcends them; a state of liberation

Tyaga – renunciation or gradual dissociation of the mind from worldly objects and desire

Upanishads – the philosophical portion of the Vedas, traditionally 108 in number; containing intimate dialogues and discussions between guru and disciple on the nature of the Absolute and the path leading towards it; literally, ‘to sit near and listen’ (to the spiritual teacher)

Upanshu – whispered

Vacha, vani – speech

Vairagya – non-attachment; absence of sensual craving and desires

Vaishvanara – the seer who observes the manifest universe or the external waking consciousness

Vani sanyam – restraint of speech

Vasana – subtle impressions which are the seeds of desires

Vata – wind, gas; one of the three humours (doshas) described in Ayurveda; associated with the air element

Vayu tattwa – air element

Vedas – ancient texts explaining and regulating every aspect of life from the Supreme Reality to worldly affairs; four in number: Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva, which are further divided into the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads; the oldest books in the library of mankind, parts of them revealed to sages and seers before 5,000 BC

Vedanta – one of the six principle systems of Indian philosophy; literally, ‘the last part of the Vedas’; based primarily on the Upanishads; the doctrine of non-dualism (Advaita), a philosophy stating one non-dual eternal principle underlying and causing all creation

Veera bhava – heroic and dynamic nature; warrior personality

Vichara – reflection; enquiry into the nature of the self, Brahman or truth

Vidya – knowledge or science, particularly knowledge of spiritual truth and non-mundane reality

Vijnana – intuitive ability of the mind; essential knowledge, wisdom; the principle of pure intelligence; understanding; discrimination, discernment

Vijnanamaya kosha – astral or psychic sheath or body; one of the sheaths of the soul, consisting of the subtler level of our

own existence with its vision, intuition, wisdom and power of understanding; the covering of the self which is made of knowledge

Vikalpa – fancy, unfounded belief, imagination; oscillation of the mind; one of the five modifications of mind listed in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*

Viparyaya – reverse; mistake; distraction of mind; wrong knowledge or wrong understanding

Vishnu granthi – psychic block or knot particularly related to manipura, anahata and vishuddhi chakras, symbolizing the bondage of personal and emotional attachment

Vishuddhi chakra – literally, 'centre of purification', the psychic/pranic centre located at the level of the throat pit or the thyroid gland; it is the psychic centre particularly connected with purification and communication

Vishwaroopa – cosmic form

Viveka – discrimination; right knowledge or understanding; sense of discrimination between the self and what is not the self, between the eternal and the transitory, between consciousness and unconsciousness, between prakriti and purusha

Viyoga – separation

Vritti – a modification arising in the mind related to a thought pattern; a particular mental state or condition

Vyadhi – disease, sickness, illness; one of the unavoidable sufferings of life

Yajna – worship through sacrifice or sacrificial rite for internal and external purification; yajna has three components: ritual or worship, satsang and unconditional giving

Yama – self-restraints or rules of conduct which render the mind tranquil; first stage of ashtanga yoga in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*: ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (honesty), brahmacharya (continence) and aparigraha (abstention from greed)

Yoga – union; the root is yuj, meaning 'to join', 'to yoke'; a system of practice leading to a state of union between the individual and universal awareness; practices, philosophy and lifestyle to achieve peace, and spiritual wisdom as well

as perfect health, sound mind and a balanced personality;
one of the six main systems of Indian philosophy

Yoga nidra – ‘psychic sleep’; pratyahara practice in which the body sleeps while the mind remains aware as its movements are guided and quietened by instructions, inducing deep relaxation of body, mind and emotions

Yoga Sutras – ancient authoritative text on raja yoga by Sage Patanjali

Yogi – an adept of yoga; follower of the yoga system of philosophy and practice

Yudhishthira – literally, ‘firm in battle’; name of the eldest Pandava brother in the *Mahabharata* epic

Yuga – an age, epoch or cycle of earth and mankind; the four ages (Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and the present Kali Yuga) combine to make one Maha Yuga of 432,000 years

Index

- Acupuncture 148
Advaita 35
Ageing 85, 159
Asana 7, 17, 18, 66, 70, 83,
137, 142, 175, 200, 201, 202,
257, 296, 301, 306
Ashram 277, 332
Attachment 4, 5, 11, 29, 39,
42, 50, 126, 152, 167, 234,
238, 239, 242, 244, 262, 280,
283, 330
Attraction and repulsion 4, 54,
126
Awareness 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 18,
34, 39, 41, 42, 43, 58, 60, 66,
73, 93, 98, 112, 113, 120,
129, 130, 194, 184, 191, 201,
204, 206, 283, 284
Ayurveda 147, 148

Balance 4, 12, 25, 44, 45, 62,
64, 70, 82, 125, 226, 324,
330
Bhagavad Gita 4, 10, 45, 57,
58, 84, 160, 225, 236, 241,
249, 251, 253, 258, 259, 262,
264, 271, 275, 279, 286, 327,
328, 331, 336
Bhakti 209, 210
Bhakti yoga 25, 152, 166
Bihar School of Yoga 62, 88, 90,
100, 137, 169, 214, 293, 332
Bihar Yoga Bharati 32, 89,
100, 172, 186, 321, 323, 325,
329
Body 3, 9, 16, 66, 69, 94, 116,
146, 175, 187, 228, 235, 291
Buddhi 21

Chakras 10, 38, 39, 40, 43,
140, 215, 300, 303, 307
Children 118
Chitta shakti 9, 11
Christ and Christmas 193
Concentration 7, 8, 76, 126,
129, 138, 151, 190, 191, 204
Consciousness 5, 8, 9, 10, 39,
43, 44, 46, 48, 124, 153, 154,
166, 190, 193, 194, 205, 252,
267
Control 58, 59, 60

Desires 3, 5, 8, 38, 42, 49, 50,
65, 78, 82, 98, 112, 125, 161,
180, 184, 187, 254, 255, 280,
327, 332, 333

- Destiny 113, 125, 234
 Devotion 210
 Dharana 27, 34, 39, 45, 51, 76, 84, 302; See Concentration
 Dharma 65, 98, 161, 233, 236, 251, 282, 284, 292, 308, 327, 337, 342
 Dhyana, See Meditation
 Diet 120, 216, 218
 Discipline 57, 58, 64, 116, 134, 189, 190, 198, 205, 217, 333, 334
 Discrimination 88, 237, 252, 310
 Disease 4, 16, 21, 93, 94, 95, 96, 106, 111, 113, 135, 147, 158, 174, 192, 223, 318; cancer 105, 120, 315; diabetes 7, 92, 99, 105, 314; DIAFS 119; hypertension 92, 105 191; insomnia 301; respiratory disorders 106, 314
 Ecology 325
 Ego 4, 59, 77, 124, 180, 181, 183, 184, 199, 211, 247, 268, 329, 330
 Emotions 3, 8, 9, 40, 59, 85, 127, 151, 153, 165, 187, 209, 333
 Energy and consciousness 39
 Enlightenment 162, 183
 Evolution 81, 246
 Faith 330, 331, 332, 339, 342
 God 74, 85, 132, 152, 180, 181, 187, 188, 189, 210, 327, 328, 331, 332, 336, 337, 338, 339; God-realization 117, 155, 187, 198, 326, 337, 338
 Grace 326, 342
 Granthis 37, 39, 43; Brahma 39, 40; Rudra 41, 42; Vishnu 40, 41
 Gunas 27, 53, 77, 247, 248
 Guru-disciple 183, 330
 Hatha yoga 44, 147
 Head, heart and hands 3, 6, 63, 70, 113, 187, 191
 Instincts 38
 Jnana yoga 26
 Kabirdas 60, 212, 304
 Karma 81, 184, 187, 247, 279, 280, 281, 285, 286, 308, 338
 Karma yoga 26, 154, 281, 282
 Koshas 124, 144, 221, 222, 227, 303
 Kriya yoga 166
 Kundalini yoga 38, 140, 166
 Lifestyle 6, 18, 70, 82, 110, 111, 114, 115, 117, 131, 174, 196, 218, 333
 Mahabharata 284
 Mantra 36, 75, 130, 138, 139, 140, 141, 214, 215, 216
 Medical science 102, 103, 107, 108, 318
 Meditation 10, 30, 34, 39, 57, 60, 72, 77, 82, 83, 119, 120, 131, 151, 177, 190, 205, 206, 230, 259, 267, 301, 334, 338
 Mind 23, 26, 37, 57, 58, 63, 64, 68, 72, 126, 127, 129, 131, 141, 148, 149, 153, 154, 159, 164, 176, 177, 182, 183,

- 198, 203, 204, 205, 213, 227,
235, 239, 241, 243, 244, 266,
267, 273
- Nadis 148
- Negative materialism 62, 64
- Nidra 42, 43, 44
- One-pointedness 58, 59
- Peace 82
- Prana 144, 201, 221
- Prana shakti 9, 11, 202, 203,
221, 318
- Pranayama 19, 120, 144, 145,
202
- Pratyahara 9, 34, 44, 45, 59,
73, 76, 151, 177, 179, 203,
259, 261, 262, 264, 267
- Prayer 81, 215
- Purification 11
- Purushartha 6, 125, 128, 159,
160, 193, 234, 280, 326, 328
- Raja yoga 126, 197, 203, 209,
256, 266, 309, 311
- Relaxation 68, 129, 130, 142,
173
- Renunciation 6, 52
- Research on Yoga in Education
(RYE) 96
- Rishi Gheranda 103
- Rishis 102, 104, 238
- Sadhana 30, 37, 38, 40 49, 52,
181, 260, 285
- Samadhi 29, 53, 54, 181, 193,
251, 252
- Samkhya 23, 198, 242
- Samskaras 21, 23, 47, 50, 62,
81, 149, 153, 181, 184, 185,
- 199, 204, 205, 228, 246, 285,
338
- Sannyasa 76, 75, 233, 236,
281, 282, 285, 331, 332
- Sanyam, restraint 236, 239,
265, 333, 340
- Satsang 339
- Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram
125
- Self-discovery 86, 87
- Self-realization 35, 335
- Shankaracharya 82
- Shatkarma 147, 217
- Shivalingam 48, 49, 51
- Spirituality 156, 163, 177, 181,
194
- Stress 4, 6, 7, 12, 83, 107, 111,
117, 135, 137, 138, 140, 145,
169, 172, 190, 227, 298, 324
- Suffering 4, 22, 25, 63, 64, 68,
72, 81
- Swabhava 274, 280
- Swami Nadabrahmananda 202
- Swami Niranjanananda 88
- Swami Satyananda 35, 51, 55,
88, 313, 340
- Swami Sivananda 312, 313,
335, 337, 341
- SWAN meditation 3, 69, 112,
257, 299
- Tattwas 10
- Tension 93
- Vipassana 212
- Vrittis 5, 42, 126, 149, 150,
188, 191, 192, 200, 204, 206,
244, 265, 267, 271
- Witness 72
- Women 75

- World Health Organization (WHO) 103, 107, 311
- Yama and niyama 205, 256, 257, 275, 277, 278
- Yoga 7, 18, 20, 23, 34, 55, 57, 60, 65, 67, 78, 83, 85, 92, 95, 98, 99, 102, 110, 112, 113, 115, 123, 132, 133, 146, 164, 169, 287, 186, 188, 189, 190, 196, 291, 206, 220, 229, 274, 308, 309, 310, 322, 328, 332, 333; aim of 3, 7, 64, 82, 135, 292, 295, 300, 308; mind management 17, 72, 73, 117, 123, 126, 129, 287, 189, 193, 298, 253, 265, 269, 299, 305; origin 74; psychology 16, 18, 149; religion 75; research 115; spiritual aspect 117; therapy 7, 16, 66, 95, 99, 104, 116, 231
- Yoga application, addiction 333, 334; army 31, 138, 171, 207, 295, 302, 320; cancer 201; education 3, 17, 33, 96, 208, 294, 321; HIV+ 22, 67, 95, 106, 119, 315; medical colleges 30, 89, 108, 170, 207, 317; medical field 138, 314, 316; prisons 32, 89, 97, 171, 207, 293, 316, 320, 333; PTSD 97; research 90, 92, 93, 120, 139, 170, 202, 206, 207, 293, 314; space program 323; sports people 319; villages 32, 89, 334, 341; yoga therapy training 89
- Yoga nidra 44, 117, 119, 142, 178, 203, 212, 261, 301
- Yoga Research Foundation (YRF) 106
- Yoga Sutras 4, 5, 8, 34, 43, 77, 115, 126, 53, 58, 59, 64, 134, 150, 175, 189, 191, 193, 194, 197, 198, 201, 298, 244, 246, 256, 311
- Yugas 336

Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



“Management of thought, management of behaviour and management of action has to be the thrust of yoga practice in the coming times. We can practise asana for physical wellbeing, we can practise meditation for experiencing some relaxation, peace and quiet in the mind, and to remove stress and anxiety. Now we have to give a focus to our yogic efforts. That focus has to be something grounded, something practical, which can improve our life condition today. This has to be the thrust of yoga at present.”

Volume Seven of *Yoga Sadhana Panorama* contains discourses and satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati from 1993 to 1999 in several cities of India. He addresses a variety of audiences and presents the vast spectrum of yoga and its practical application so that everyone feels inspired and encouraged to ‘give yoga a chance’ in their life.



ISBN: 978-81-938420-0-3